



# MEDIA AND NATIONAL IDEOLOGIES

## Analysis of reporting on war crime trials in the former Yugoslavia

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 **MEDIACENTAR**  
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# INTRODUCTION: TOWARDS PEACE JOURNALISM

*Zala VOLČIČ & Amer DŽIHANA*



The case of the former Yugoslav states provides a powerful example of an arena in which the mass media continue to play a crucial role in creating and representing (ethno) national identities. (Ethno) national identities retain important ideological functions in the region. When during the end of the 1980s and 1990s, the nationalisms of all the republics of the former Yugoslavia escalated, each community first re-activated or re-created its national media in order to reinforce and re-invent a sense of national identity and difference (see more in Thompson 1994, Gordy 1999, Reljic 2001). The media were largely responsible for framing an (exclusive) sense of national identity and belonging, one that excluded others and exacerbated ethnic tensions. There is a substantial body of literature from a variety of perspectives that suggests the media in the former Yugoslav countries contributed to and continue to be an important influence on the spread of a national(ist) forms of identification that provide little space for a democratic solution to conflicts (Thompson 1994, Silber 1997, Kurspahic 2003, Reljic 2001, Hrvatin & Trampuz 2000, Volcic 2006, Kolstø 2009, Skopljanac-Brunner 2000). Instead of offering a space for democratic debate and critical reflections of the situation on the ground, the nationalistic elites in all of the former Yugoslav republics alike ensured the continuation of the system by heavily employing nationalist ideology as a new source for the legitimacy of their rule, and enlisting the media for this project.

After the wars in the last decade of the 20th century, the former Yugoslav countries were characterized by a particularly ambivalent state of affairs in their cultural, economic and political spheres. All seven former Yugoslav states, including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, have

been or continue to go through the process of transition from a centralized, socialist, state-run economy to a privatized, market-driven economy. Politically, these new states are involved in a specific type of (ethno) national identity building, since few of the republics had the historical experience of being an independent nation-state. In media landscapes, ethno-national ideology remains the dominant ideology through which the media represent social reality. These states have also experienced the rise of commercial media. On one hand, we have witnessed a complete deregulation of the print media field, while on the other hand, governments attempt to retain control over the broadcast media (even as these become heavily commercialized in order to compete and survive in a free market system). Basic and Milosavljevic (2008) write of the Slovene and Croatian contexts that a small number of national media owners with shares in diverse companies (such as the iconic beer company Lasko) control the majority of the media markets. The state does not have the mechanisms to successfully regulate the new commercial media industries. Economic deregulation, as Basic and Milosavljevic suggest, has not provided for a wider range of political content, in large part because of the convergence of interests between political and economic elites familiar in other predominantly commercial media systems.

There has also been a significant influx of private capital and with it foreign investors who mostly push for commercial content. The commercial, national(istic) model of media currently being created in the former Yugoslav region is based on efficiency, predictability, and a strong emphasis on (national) images and stereotypes – while it solicits viewers both as citizens and consumers (Volcic & Andrejevic 2009, 2010). And legally, these states deal with and represent the past in diverse manners (Bet-El 2004, Budak 2004, Brunnbauer 2004, Hoepken 1999).

This collection is an attempt to offer some explorations of the role played by nationalism in media coverage in three countries: Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and

Serbia. Broadly, we are interested in exploring how the traumatic past of the Yugoslav wars has been represented in the media and how media representations of contemporary political processes relate to the traumatic past. Specifically, we focus on media representations of the highly publicized war crime trials. For media outlets and political institutions alike, coverage of the trials of the crimes committed during the Yugoslav wars is an important way of demonstrating that, at least symbolically, there has been a break with the former regimes. The point is not only to judge the perpetrators of the crimes, but to transform the overall political paradigm. Thus, it is crucial to explore how the war trials are represented in the media, and how the trauma they represent has been incorporated into public memory. Are there historical consequences to how a society deals with the memories of war trauma? What is the role of the media in forming memories? What are the communication patterns of the media in covering the war trials? What can be done to address the dilemmas of memory that are likely to shape the future in the former Yugoslav region? The focus on the above questions is motivated by the broader goal of contributing to the study of changes in the structures and relations of media, journalism, nation, ethnicity, memory, power, and reconciliation after the Yugoslav wars.

The project's goal is to draw upon the work of scholarship in the region in order to reflect a range of perspectives and intellectual traditions in the former Yugoslavia. Each of the five chapters represents an original methodological approach to exploring the following questions:

- a) What are the patterns of representation of war crime trials which reveal ideological positioning of the media?
- b) Do media reproduce the ethno-national fragmentation of the audience?
- c) Are some media/some countries more inclined to reproduce national ideologies than others?
- d) Is it possible to establish whether different types of media ownership and regulation coincide with different patterns of nationalist discourse in the

media? For example, do media owned by foreign corporations differ in this respect from domestically owned media organizations?

- e) What is the relationship between the ideology of ethno-national elites and media reporting?
- f) What is the role of the commodification of news and information in reporting on war crime trials?
- g) How do the forms of nationalist discourse presented in routine media coverage of domestic events differ from forms of nationalist discourse present in the media coverage of exceptional events such as major war crime trials?

Many scholars (Shinar 2007, Appadurai 2006) have explored the ways in which the contemporary global and local media landscapes are defined by social and political formations that have transformed the relationships between the national, the local and the global. At the same time, new technologies have popularized the global discourse of connectivity, access, and democracy. But the reality on the ground shows that great differences and gaps remain. While most mainstream accounts of globalization emphasize the speed of transformations, far less attention is paid to »the local« contradictions that are inherent in the media processes and their representations. The transformations engendered by the use of new technologies and the globalization of capital has resulted in new power imbalances in the global landscape while also reinforcing existing national and local logics of domination, exploitation, belonging, and stereotypes. While Appadurai (2006) suggests that global media, such as CNN, offer some sense of immediacy and simultaneity by connecting us in a global world, one should insist that at the local and national levels, media tend to resist being completely globalized – in fact, they tend to retain a strong sense of (ethno) nationality – aligning themselves with national identity and national memory. As the chapters in this book show, the nation remains the essential frame for the workings of all sorts of processes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all of the articles reveal how the media

coverage of the trials reflected the dominant interests and perspectives of the ethnic fractions represented by each media organization.

Thus, the attempt of this collection is to offer the first comparative study on the patterns of the (re)production of national ideologies in discourses of the dominant media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, and to explore in-depth the process of the (re)production of national ideologies carried by the dominant mass media. Each of the authors helps to provide an in-depth sense of the historical context for understanding the contemporary political significance of the media coverage of the trials. All of the chapters are empirically grounded, historically situated, and theoretically informed.

Although each of the chapters in this volume deals with a specific case-study, the chapters all employ a comparative approach in exploring it. Comparisons are made between media from different ethnic backgrounds (the cases of Karadžić, Dobrovoljačka and Vukovar), between reporting on a trial held in the ICTY as opposed to a trial held in a domestic court (the case of Vukovar), between the perceptions of Hague tribunal trials and domestic trials (the case of the Skorpions), and between reporting on a same case over different time periods (the case of Plavšić), thus expanding the bases for comparison to several different dimensions.

There are some overarching themes that connect the chapters. We have, consequently, divided them into four main scopes of inquiry: *Media, National Identities, and Ideology; Media Discourses; the Role of Memory and Post-conflict Reconciliation; and Peace Journalism*. All of these approaches, as we will argue, share important commonalities that have informed the outlook of this volume. At the same time, the chapters represent diverse approaches, and the seven authors come from a variety of disciplines, including: media and communication studies, journalism studies, international studies, and gender studies.

## Media, National Identities, and Ideology

All the authors share a broad view of national identity as constructed by different discourses and practices. The authors acknowledge that mass media perform a crucial ideological role in representing social relations and providing accounts of power. In that sense, they are an important part of the dominant means of ideological production (Althusser 1971). What they produce are representations of the world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work. Among other types of ideological roles, the media construct for us a definition of what nationalism is, what meaning the imagery of nationalism carries, and what the problem of nationalism is understood to be. They provide rhetorical space for nationalistic discourse, and with that, for the creation and reconstruction of identities. Thus, the national media in any country provide a very powerful basis for the processes by which members of a nation ‘unite’ and ‘homogenize’. Members of the (national) media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who ‘we’ as nationals are, and who ‘we’ are not (or who is not ‘one of us’).

Many scholars (Anderson 1983, Morley and Robins 1995) have explored the important role of the mass media in the historical development of national cultures and identities. Media and cultural production have a key role to play in reconstituting national, religious, gender and ethnic identities. The influential work of Anderson (1983) argues from a historical perspective that print capitalism was essential in promoting the creation of national imagined communities. The widespread dissemination of newspapers and novels led to an awareness of the ‘steady, anonymous, simultaneous experience’ of communities of national readers (1983, p. 31). The notion of simultaneity in time and a clearly defined national space was crucial to the construction of national consciousness in its modern forms, as it is today. Newspapers connected dispersed citizens with the symbolic discourses of a

nation, and the ritual of reading the newspaper or watching the national news on the television continues to be one of the essential elements in the construction of ideas of a national community. Print and broadcast media helped to create national publics who began to imagine their community as that of a nation supported by nationalism. According to Martin-Barbero (1993), historically, it was through media representations and their media discourse that the national became a recognizable identity. And as Van Dijk (1993, p. 241) points out for the former Yugoslav context, ‘none of the political elites and their discourses could be as influential as they are without the mediating and sometimes reinforcing functions of the press, radio and television.’

All the authors in our volume demonstrate the continuation of the ethno-national character of reporting in daily newspapers. For example, in two texts focusing on cases related to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dobrovoljačka and Karadžić), where the main axis of conflicts is between Bosniak and Serbian interpretations of events, the authors demonstrate how reporting patterns are mostly homogenized according to ethno-national lines, as well as their connection with dominant political discourses within ethnic groups. Amer Džihana and Sanela Hodžić analyze media reporting about the arrest and the trial of Radovan Karadžić, the former leader of Bosnian Serbs accused of war crimes committed during the war in B&H from 1992-1995. They note that nationalist news coverage represents the dominant paradigm when reporting about events on which there is a consensus at the level of ethno-national elites, but also great differences among Bosniak, Serbian and Croatian political elites. The authors conclude that reporting strategies coincide with ethno-national lines in the region. According to Džihana and Hodžić:

The simple matrices are often employed: (1) on the one hand, Sarajevo dailies name Karadžić as a perpetrator before he is actually sentenced, as well as using the case as an instrument for questioning the existence of the Republika Srpska (2) on the other, Banja Luka and Belgrade dailies who avoid any judgments on war crimes committed in the name of their own ethnicity, and avoid political contextualization that could endanger the dominant politics of one

ethnicity, and (3) lastly, Mostar and Zagreb dailies treat the case as mostly irrelevant, since it carries little relevance for national politics of the third ethnicity.

The explanation which the authors offer is that the media operate within particular ethno-national contexts within which there is a clear definition of what counts as legitimate controversy, consensus, and deviance. Therefore the homogenous Bosniak political elites, the relative divisions among Serb elites and the distance of Croat elites when it comes to the case of Karadžić can also be noticed in the media discourses of dailies addressing Bosniak, Serb or Croat readerships.

The media are clearly not neutral agents. Any media entity holds a position in the ideological and political structure of a given society that will determine the approach according to which events are processed. The media do not passively describe or record news events, but actively reconstruct them, mostly on the basis of their own ideological affiliations. Consequently, the media structure and process events into ideologically unified messages (Kress 1983, p. 44). In this way, the media expand greatly the scope for the operation of ideology, because they enable symbolic forms to be transmitted to extended and potentially vast audiences. If ideology is conceived of as the set of ways in which the meaning conveyed by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of power and domination (Van Dijk 1993), then it is clear that mass media have enormous consequences for the propagation and diffusion of ideological phenomena. Media discourse, then, is a site for the production and diffusion of ideology. For example, according to news values, the media favor stories about negative events because these stories are generally recalled better, particularly in the case of the so-called *outgroup* members (the ‘them’ – as opposed to ‘us’ – group). This framework contributes then to the representations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as competing social forces in the construction of media discourses (Van Dijk 1989). Through media discourse, readers are in turn invited to adopt dominant representations, construct cognitive models of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and to incorporate them into their own beliefs and attitudes. It may be precisely this symbolic



power of the media that enables us to explain their specific role in the reproduction of (ethno-national) ideology (Van Dijk 1989). Predrag Marković and Katarina Subašić follow this line in their chapter on the ‘Vukovar Case.’ They analyze the Serbian and Croatian media coverage of two war crimes trials - one at the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague and the other at the War Crimes Council in Belgrade - related to the crimes committed in Vukovar in 1991 when more than 200 Croats were killed. Their chapter illustrates the clash between national and international levels in the media coverage. Significantly more attention was paid to the trials in the Hague than in Belgrade and the focus of the coverage was largely on court procedures. The authors explain that the ethno-political character of societies in these two states is created by the context within which a fair trial is not even expected for *our* convicts in *their* courts. Because of this outright dismissal of the justice meted out by the international tribunal, the trials were not considered to be particularly important for the media. The basic patterns of reporting of all four newspapers reproduce the clear distinction between Us and Them. As the authors note, ‘the expected reflex of war propaganda appears in the form of exclusiveness according to which ‘Ours’ are presented as unfairly accused heroes whereas ‘Theirs’ are insufficiently acknowledged demons.’ On the other hand, the choice of quotes from the court and the choice of facts used for reporting illustrate the ideology of the two states. As the authors put it,

The dominant media discourse in the case of the Vukovar Three reflected the broader social and political context in which the trial took place, both in Croatia and Serbia. The official Croatian policy of Vukovar as a symbol of the defense of the homeland and the greatest war site caused by the Serb aggression, the crime of crimes whose perpetrators deserve only the most severe punishment, was reflected in the reports on the trial of the three former Yugoslav officers, where they were depicted as the most distinguished representatives of the Serb aggressors, while their affiliation with the then-Yugoslav army was neglected.

On the other hand, the authors argue that in Serbia ‘the trial and judgments (particularly the appeals judgments), were seen as anti-Serb and proved that The Hague Tribunal was a political court, established to unjustly try Serbs.’

## Media Discourses

In the process of social reproduction the media perform a function that is both ideological and political. Ideologically, the media continually process materials produced in social life so as to integrate them into a consistent ideological system. In other words, the media help to shape and influence the ideological structure of the society in which they act. Politically, the media try to make sense of the world for others, namely the consumers of media products. In so far as ideologies are tied into and arise out of social and material practices and give expression and articulation to them, the media inevitably have a political effect on social reproduction (Kress 1983, p. 43).

Dominant media discourses then are both shaped by the struggle over representation, and, in turn, influence the course of this struggle. More specifically, the media affect and are affected by power relations within the social system, which means that media discourses provide fertile grounds for an ideologically oriented discourse analysis.

The mainstream research on media discourses in recent years has been focused on the broad framework of critical discourse analysis, which is concerned with diverse issues, such as the projection of power through discourse, the instantiation of dominance and inequality in discourse, the ideological underpinning of discourse and discourse's affiliation with social change (Fairclough 1989a, 1995, Fowler 1991, Fowler et al. 1979, Van Dijk 1993). The works of Hall (1996) and Fairclough (1995), who emphasize the discursive nature of representations, are particularly instructive in this regard. Hall defines media discourse as »the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works« (Hall 1996, p. 26). These mental frameworks serve as orientation in the society we live in and seem to be essential for

cognitive survival in everyday life. Therefore, in order to identify ideologies in any articulation, it is necessary to look at how reality is represented in it and what kind of attitudes, values, beliefs, biases and/or perspectives are encoded in the text. Biljana Žikić, for example, in her chapter on Biljana Plavsic shows how national ideology relies not only on the gendering of national territory as female, but also on the figuring of women as both the metaphorical ‘mothers of the nation’ and metaphorical and literal reproduction machines, through which the nation is to be reproduced. She shows in-depth how Plavsic continues to be constructed as a (mythical) politician-female warrior.

In particular, the concept of ideology is one of the most controversial and elusive issues here. According to Van Dijk (1998), ideologies constitute a ‘system of ideas’ and hence they occupy a particular place in the symbolic field of thought and belief, taking shape in the form of ‘cognition.’ In addition, ideologies are clearly social and mostly (though not always) associated with group interests, conflicts or struggle. They may serve to legitimize or to resist power or dominance, or they may represent social problems and contradictions. They can be related to social classes and other social groups as well as institutions, organizations and other forms of social structure. Finally, the concept of ideology can be associated with language use, as can be seen in the claim that ideologies are typically expressed and reproduced in and through language and semiotic systems. The primary functions of ideologies in a society, such as concealment, manipulation and so forth, take the form of discursive social practice.

Thus, language performs a crucial role in expressing, changing and particularly reproducing ideologies. Yet language is not used in a context-less vacuum. Rather, it is used in a discourse context that is constructed within the ideology of social systems and institutions. Since language operates within this social dimension, it tends to reflect and construct ideologies. Hence, the concern of this volume with specific national contexts and the role they play in helping to shape media representations of

the traumatic past. We focus on structural differences between the national ideologies reproduced in different media systems, while emphasizing the differences between discursive patterns of reproduction of nationalist ideologies. As claimed, the authors in our volume focus on several prominent cases, incidents and personalities that remain crucial to an understanding of the role of the media in the coverage of particular events. For example, Karmen Erjavec examines recent media reporting about the case of ‘Dobrovoljačka’ in the daily press of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The case of ‘Dobrovoljačka’ refers to the murder of eight soldiers in the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in Dobrovoljačka street in Sarajevo, on May 3rd 1992. Building on a discourse-analysis approach, Erjavec shows that media reporting is divided on an ethno-nationalist basis. On one hand, the media from Sarajevo addressing a mostly Bosniak readership present the events so as to imply that the responsibility for the attack and consequently the death of the JNA soldiers should be attributed to the Serbs. On the other hand, the media from Banja Luka and Belgrade, directed mainly towards a Serbian readership, interpret this event as an attack provoked by the Bosniak side – one which was planned in advance and which was conducted in order to expel the Serbs and start the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The crucial media strategy identified by Erjavec is the focus on different alleged starting points or triggers for the attack. According to Erjavec,

The Sarajevo dailies *Oslobođenje* and *Dnevni Avaz* more or less homogeneously represent the event on May 3, 1992, such that Bosniak forces were defending the President of the RB&H Alija Izetbegović, who was captured a day earlier by the JNA, and in doing so, were defending B&H. When the JNA soldier convoy drove on Dobrovoljačka Street, the JNA began to fire first, and thus it is guilty of the attack and the deaths of JNA troops. The Banja Luka daily *Glas Srpske* and all the Serb dailies analyzed, or more precisely, the Belgrade newspapers, likewise more or less homogeneously represented the event. Other than *Politika*, most of them neglect the significance of Izetbegović’s abduction. If a reader reads the articles in these newspapers, she or he will find not a single sign hinting at the fact that the abduction ever took place. The newspapers claim that the Bosniak side attacked JNA troops, who merely wanted to leave Sarajevo, with premeditation.

Such strategies enable the media to place their reporting in completely different contexts. Therefore, some facts are not talked about and completely omitted, whereas others are emphasized, some questions are asked and some are unimaginable, some answers are given and some are omitted. The same pattern appears in reporting on the post-war investigation of the Dobrovoljačka case, with the qualification that the main arguments of both sides are directed towards proving the politicization of legislation in the two countries. Erjavec shows that the media battles are not just about an interpretation of history, but also about the current problems and arguments between the two states. The exception which Erjavec found is the daily from Banja Luka, *Nezavisne Novine*, which gave both sides the chance to present their opinions on the event.

Similarly, Marković and Subašić consider the Vukovar case, in which the axis of the conflict is based on Serbian and Croatian interpretations of the events. They show how the reporting of Serbian and Croatian dailies largely illustrates and strengthens the official ideological positions of Serbia and Croatia.

Such findings reinforce Van Dijk's (1998) argument about the relations between media discourse and ideology. Mass circulation and sharing among group ideologies all presuppose communication, that is, expressions or reproductions in the media. In order to probe into the processes of this reproduction, it should be realized that, first of all, ideological conflicts between different types of nationalism must be analyzed within their specific historical, political and cultural frameworks.

## The Role of Memory and Post-Conflict Reconciliation

According to critical scholars (Garnham 2000, Tracey 1997), political discourse and the process of forming public opinion have been replaced by discourses about

economics. With this in mind, we might consider the ways in which the expression and any formation of political reconciliation in the former Yugoslav states are expressed in terms of the economic, commercially mediated sphere.

Especially during a period of dramatic social changes in the former Yugoslav states, which created profound risk and anxiety (Salecl 2004), commercial media discourses provided citizens with instructions for how to understand and adjust to these changes. For example, discourses of advertising and consumption provide analogues of mental, emotional and spiritual support, but avoid questioning the past, the overarching social system or dominant ideology. Such discourses do not challenge the emerging status quo, but are implicated in political debates insofar as they frame them in ways that suppress collective solutions to societal problems.

Free-market demands, with their falsely assumed principles of equality, choice and freedom on the one hand, and their inherent contradictions on the other (such as framing social issues, like poverty, as individual problems, whereby individuals are rendered entirely responsible for their failures as well as their successes, their despair as well as their happiness) are replacing the demands for political inquiry into issues, for example, of public memory.

Thus this collection is also devoted to issues of collective and public memory. Scholars in many disciplines have focused on how a sense of the past can inform a group's politics, religion, art and social life. The importance of memory is taken for granted, but the functioning of memory in any particular context is still disputable (see Kuhn 2000). Collective memory, as a concept, was developed by the French philosopher and sociologist Halbwachs, who distinguishes individual from collective memory, the latter associated with a particular group. Halbwachs emphasizes how social processes influence both people's personal memories of their own lifetimes, and their shared, collective memories of the past. Additionally, collective memories partially shape the reality that enables people to imagine the world in which they

live. Margalit (2002) identifies two different types of collective memory: ‘shared memory’ and ‘common memory.’ In his taxonomy, a common memory is an aggregate notion that allows individuals to remember a specific, commonly experienced event. A shared memory, however, is more than an accumulation of individual memories, since it is about communicating and sharing the memory itself. In other words, a shared memory is an active process by which a vision is preserved. Many scholars (Margalit 2002) point to how it is through ‘shared memory’ that communities produce and reproduce themselves, and how the production and reproduction of communities depends upon the dialectics of collective remembering and forgetting. Our volume urges us to rethink the importance of collective memory for both the ways in which war crimes are confronted and the processes of reconciliation. Coming to terms with the past, particularly with war crimes, which are one of the most painful parts of that past, is one of the crucial elements of reconciliation. As Adorno writes (1986), how a society thinks of its past is a key dimension of peace and reconciliation.

The role of media in the reconciliation process occupies a special place in globally circulating human rights discussion and literature, and it is especially relevant to discussions about transitional institutions, the main examples of which are truth commissions (Wilson 2001, p. 97). Fletcher and Weinstein define »transitional justice« as ‘the process by which a state seeks to redress the violations of a prior regime’ (Fletcher and Weinstein 2002, p. 572).

The question of reconciliation with the past, specifically Serbia’s role in the former Yugoslav wars, remains a critical one. Adorno (1986) says it is not possible to create a sense of closure as long as the past lives in the present in the form of objective conditions. He is mostly concerned with the ways in which those involved – the complicit – need to come to terms with their own past behaviors. He suggests that wishing to turn the page and wipe the past from memory is extremely dangerous

because ‘the past one wishes to evade is still so intensely alive’ (Adorno 1986, p. 115). Ignoring and discrediting shared memories of ‘other’ ethno-national communities is dangerous and hinders the process of reconciliation.

Green shows how, in the aftermath of violence in Guatemala, fear penetrated social memory and became a way of life - ‘invisible, indeterminate, and silent’ (1994, p. 1). The tendency to internalize fear and violence leads to what Martin-Baro calls the ‘militarization of the mind’ (1990). Working in the same context, Manz (2002) also highlights the inability (of individuals and groups) to move away from the past. He portrays ways in which Guatemalan communities faced the fundamental challenge of reconciling deep, inescapable mourning over the traumas of the past with the hope for a better future (Manz 2002, p. 295). Most of the chapters in this volume locate hope in attempts to thematize the conflicting past and our relation to this past, as well as in the efforts to establish memories that can be shared and acknowledged by all sides involved in the conflict. In particular, Zdravkovic-Zonta aims to use the analysis of the domestic media coverage of the ‘Skorpions’ trial as the basis for assessing the trial’s significance in terms of countering ethnic hatred and violence and contributing to post-conflict reconciliation and restorative justice. She closely examines the role of the Serbian media in producing national ideologies and public memory, and their role in post-conflict reconciliation. She also analyzes how Serbian print media advocated nationalistic ideologies of Serbian patriotism while presenting the Serbian people as victims. The analysis shows that media were covering the trial in a manner which does not contribute to reconciliation. In spite of this, the author writes ‘that media attention is focused more heavily on issues related to reconciliation, while news dealing with guilt and ethnic cleansing is much less popular.’ Her chapter claims that the significance of the media lies in their being, as the author says, second-degree witnesses in the trial as public opinion is largely shaped by reporting about the war crimes. There was no thorough discussion regarding the causes of war crimes and almost no attention has been paid to victims. Rather, the media focused mainly on



one version of the past which avoided any kind of responsibility for war atrocities, instead presenting the accused as heroes and victims of conspiracies.

## Mapping Peace Journalism

Many different media approaches attempt to understand the role of media and journalism in covering violent conflicts and dealing with the past. For example, Hirst and Patching (2007) write that ‘given that we rely so heavily on the news media to keep us informed, we have the right to ask: Can the media respond effectively to those crises?’ (Hirst and Patching 2007, p. 3) Some authors in our volume (Erjavec, Zdravkovic-Zonta) explore the ways in which the biases in media coverage pose a challenge to post-war efforts at reconciliation that are one of the objectives of the developing practice known as peace journalism. The perspective of peace journalism, which argues that journalists can play a grass-roots role in helping to avoid war on the one hand and to participate in processes of post-conflict resolution on the other, provides a useful set of concepts for examining the post-war coverage in the former Yugoslav context. All of the authors in this volume subscribe to the goals of peace journalism and their work provides important insights for those interested in the role that journalism can play in addressing conflicts and working toward peace.

Wolfsfeld (2004) proposes a specific model to explore the role of media during conflict and post-conflict situations, because the media can represent the main space for all involved parties to express their voices. The experience of any violent conflict is complex, confusing and brutal, and the participants themselves rarely have a full understanding of what is happening. It has been argued that during conflicts there are in fact two distinct wars being waged, the physical war and the war that is mediated, sanitized and packaged for media users. To understand the media’s

coverage of any war, the world is not revealed 'as it is' but as a map of the broad preoccupations, interests and values of society articulated through journalistic discourse. According to Wolfsfeld, 'during times of crises, the news media are likely to play the role of 'faithful servants' by emphasising official frames and either ignoring or discrediting challengers. At other times they can play the opposite role of 'advocates of the underdog' by amplifying the claims of challengers against the authorities' (Wolfsfeld 1997, p. 53).

The role of journalists during and after violent conflicts is fraught with ambiguity and complexity. Although war or conflict journalists are expected to follow journalistic professionalism, as Sonwalker (2004) writes, 'war and conflict reporting is a matter of constant tension between journalists socio-cultural background and professional norms such as objectivity, impartiality, and fairness' (Sonwalker 2004, p. 221). Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) suggest that journalists in both conflict and post-conflict situations should be equipped with specific resolution skills which could enable them to become more effective professional and ethical human beings (McGoldrick and Lynch 2000, p. 6). For example, Bell (1998, p. 102), who reported on both the Gulf war and the former Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, has labeled objective journalism a 'sort of bystander's journalism.' For Bell, objectivity breeds a cold, detached dispassion in the face of human tragedy, and he argues instead for a 'journalism of attachment' (1998, p. 103) that is fair and impartial, yet moral and caring. In addition, Howard claims that it is important for journalists to understand the causes, processes and solutions for violent conflicts and report these to a public well-informed about the conflict (Howard 2004, p. 5).

Different media approaches dealing with the use of media during the peace process and post-conflict reconciliation represent recent intellectual attempts to conceptualize the role of journalism during and after violent periods. In journalism studies, these have different names: 'peace journalism' (Galtung 1992, 1998, Lynch and McGoldrick

2006), ‘conflict sensitive journalism’ (Howard 2004), Hieber’s ‘proactive journalism’ (2001), and ‘mediation journalism’ (Manoff 1998, Botes 1998). These media approaches offer concrete ‘interpretation and intervention tools’ for journalists during and after violent conflicts.

The main concepts of peace journalism were developed by Galtung in the 1970s. In short, peace journalism promotes the idea that media can report information with accuracy, impartiality, and responsibility, while offering specific advice to the journalists: report all sides of the conflict, clarify the frame of reference, not emphasize only certain views, focus on peace ‘benefits’, realize the weakness of the media, etc. (Galtung 1992, p. 141). Lynch and McGoldrick write that ‘when editors and reporters make choices – on what stories to report and about how to report them – that creates opportunities for society at large to consider and value the non-violent responses to conflicts’ (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. 5). They argue that peace journalism ‘uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting; provides a new route map for tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism...’ (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. 5).

Furthermore, Howard’s ‘conflict sensitive journalism’, for example, pays more attention to the potential of journalists to influence conflict resolution and to analyze possible solutions by employing the concept of conflict analysis. According to Howard (2004)

a conflict sensitive journalist applies conflict analysis and searches for new voices and new ideas about the conflict. He or she reports on who is trying to resolve the conflict, looks closely at all sides, and also reports on how other conflicts have been resolved. A conflict sensitive journalist takes no sides, but is engaged in the search for solutions (Howard 2004, p. 15).

The ‘mediation journalism’ approach developed by Manoff (1998) and Botes (1998) compares journalists with mediators in conflict. Both can mobilize involved parties in

order to encourage debate. However, the media are not expected to resolve the conflict but rather foster communication (Botes 1995, Manoff 1998).

Hieber's 'proactive journalism' argues that media can produce content to promote peace. She writes that 'the question now is no longer, 'Can media play a role?' but rather, 'What is the best approach for media to take in promoting humanitarianism, peace, tolerance, human rights and democracy?' (Hieber 2001, p. 4).

As seen above, despite the fact that there are many different types of peace journalism, there are some common characteristics that they all share: they juxtapose peace journalism with 'war journalism.' Galtung creates a helpful model where he contrasts these characteristics. Below is a simplified summary of it:

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## **Peace Journalism**

### **I. Peace/conflict-oriented**

Explore conflict formation, x parties,  
y goals, z issues,

General 'win-win' orientation

Open space, open time, causes and  
outcomes also in history/culture

Making conflicts transparent

Giving voice to all parties;

empathy, understanding

Humanization of all sides

Proactive: prevention before any  
violence/war occurs

Focus on invisible effects of violence  
(trauma, damage to structure)

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### **II. Truth-oriented**

Expose untruths on all sides/uncover  
all cover-ups

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### **III. People-oriented**

Focus on suffering of all; on women, the  
aged, children, giving voice to voiceless

Naming all evil-doers

Focus on wider community as a  
possible peacemaker

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### **IV. Solution-oriented**

Peace = non-violence + creativity

Highlight peace initiatives

Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction,  
reconciliation.

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## **War-oriented Journalism**

### **I. War-oriented**

Focus on conflict arena, 2 parties,  
1 goal (to win)

General zero-sum orientation

Closed space, closed time; focus on the  
question of who threw the first stone

Making war opaque/secret

'Us-them' as the problem, focus on  
who prevails in war

Dehumanization of 'them'

Reactive: waiting for violence before  
reporting

Focus only on visible effect of violence  
(killed, wounded and material damage)

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### **II. Propaganda-oriented**

Expose 'their' untruths/help  
'our' cover-ups/lies

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### **III. Elite-oriented**

Focus on 'our' suffering; on elite males,  
being their mouth-piece

Naming only 'theirs' evil-doers

Focus on elites as only  
possible peacemakers

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### **IV. Victory-oriented**

Peace = victory + ceasefire

Conceal peace initiative

Leaving a possibility for another war.

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There are several scholars who apply the main concepts of peace journalism in order to evaluate the role of news media in the peace process and conflict resolution (see especially Shinar (2002, 2003 and 2007), Lee and Maslog (2005), Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006), Goretti (2007), Ross, (2007). These authors believe in the possible direct effects of journalism in helping to build a peaceful and non-violent culture. Research by Lee and Maslog (2005), for example, explores coverage of regional conflicts in Asia, involving the Kashmir issue, the Tamil Tiger movement, the Mindanao conflict, and the Maluku and Aceh civil wars in ten English-language daily newspapers from four Asian countries – India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. They argue that the media coverage is dominated by war journalism, but suggest that the findings can help policy makers to train journalists in peace journalism, since the aim of journalists should be to contribute to resolving conflicts or wars in a peaceful manner.

Furthermore, Wolfseld's research (2004, 2004) in evaluating the role of media in the peace process shows two main obstacles that the media face: they focus on events rather than processes; and they tend to employ traditional news values like conflict (Wolfseld 1999). Wolfseld points out, however, that the media are, most likely to play a constructive role when there is a high level of support in favor of a peace process, when the intensity of crises is low, and when journalists are not under the pressure to write sensationalist news stories (Wolfseld 1999). According to him, media should provide special sections and programs dedicated to peace issues. He also suggests that there is a need to begin a dialogue about these issues among policy makers, journalists, researchers, and activists.

There are major criticisms of peace journalism practice because 'it runs counter to the time-honoured journalistic principle of objectivity that sees the journalist as a detached and unbiased mirror of reality' (Lee and Maslog 2005, p. 312).

Hanitzsch (2004, 2007) in particular is a harsh critic of the concept of peace journalism, arguing that it over-estimates the potential of the media in 'building

peace.’ Hanitzsch conceptualizes peace journalism as opposed to the norm of ‘objectivity’ in news reporting (Hanitzsch 2007). A loose body of doctrine has grown around the notion of objectivity, focusing on fairness, balance, truthfulness and the importance of verification in journalism. Objectivity is an affirmation of the belief in and centrality of facts, and a disavowal of values in journalism. Objectivity has not only become a defense against charges of bias, but asserts that truth and factual information can be established if ‘truth claims’ are subjected to rules and practices deemed legitimate by a professional community. Hanitzsch argues that journalists should not become activists, but should rather engage with the world from an ostensibly neutral, dispassionate perspective. Additionally, Hackett suggest that ‘peace journalism must translate its normative concerns, rooted in the discipline of peace research, into a strategy based on a theoretically-informed analysis of the governing logics of news production’ (Hackett 2006, p. 2). Hanitzsch (2006) proposes three strategies to make the practice of peace journalism possible: to reform the field of journalism from within and to transform the way news is done; to build a new field in order to create alternative media organization support by civil society so that the practice of peace journalism can be employed by such organizations; and the need to have intervention from a political or social movement in order to change the environment of journalism practice (Hackett 2006, p. 11).

Similar to Hanitzsch, Loyn (2007) believes that the opposition to peace journalism is not war journalism but ‘good’ journalism. The main problem is that journalists are attributed an active participation whereas journalists should play the role of an observer, not a player. Although the proponents of peace journalism sometimes successfully diagnose the problems in reporting, Loyn thinks that their solutions are more often wrong and points out that instead of inventing new tools for reporters it is necessary for existing ones to be sharpened.

## Conclusions

Media are becoming too commercial in seeing violent conflicts as commodities. In doing so, media often deploy sensational and colorful words in order to attract readers. Most media coverage tends to concentrate on reporting incidents rather than maximizing public understanding of the causes and contexts of such violent issues. The recommendation is that events should be placed in context to show the bigger picture, trends, causes, even solutions if possible. Instead of doing so, some media organizations drive the conflicts themselves, because profit pressures do remain the main reasons behind journalism performance.

The intrusion of infotainment and tabloidization into journalism has had powerful effects and is triggered by the commercial imperative to deliver maximum audience numbers to advertisers. Combined with advanced information technologies that deliver a deluge of media products and the prevalence of political communications or spin (Louw 2005) the result is the impossibility of offering spaces for reconciliation. As McNair argues, the ‘ever increasing competitiveness of the media market puts a commercial premium on sensationalism and prurience in coverage of politics’ (McNair 2000, p. 4). Describing specifically the UK media, McNair (2000) laments the excess of punditry, the profusion of insubstantial concerns (such as sleaze and celebrity) and the rise of the political PR industry that has come to characterize media landscapes.

The commodification of news and information fundamentally alters the role played by the media. Rather than serving the public interest and encouraging democratic participation and peace-building by an engaged and informed citizenry, journalism can become an ‘alienating, cynicism-inducing, narcotizing force in our political culture, turning people off citizenship, rather than equipping them to fulfill their democratic potential’ (McNair 2000, p. 8). That is why, as all of the authors in the



volume point out, it is crucial to understand the media political economy approach, which is interested in the influence of media ownership on media content. For example, Predrag Marković and Katarina Subašić in their chapter on Vukovar show how nationalistic ideology is reflected in media discourse, while pointing out the difference between the state media and privately owned/commercial media. The authors note that media which are still largely owned by the state report more moderately and use every possible opportunity to present the official attitude of the authorities. On the other hand, media which are mainly private and commercially oriented report in a way that affects the audience more by introducing elements of national pride and national aspirations.

However, one needs to be careful in adopting the media political economy approach uncritically as well. When Erjavec examines the connection between manners of reporting and media ownership, she does not find it to be strong. She emphasizes that the change of 'ownership does not have to mean a change in content, as it is possible that different owners represent the same ideology or political option.' Equally, we should not forget the dilemma between nation and profession (Zendberg and Neiger 2005) where journalists reporting on cases that are nationally charged can find themselves succumbing to bias, so that ethnically-based reporting does not necessarily have to be externally imposed but can be willingly accepted and developed by journalists who share the dominant ethno-national ideology of the society. Erjavec believes that the main cause of homogenous representation is the consensus between Serbian political elites on one hand and Bosniak elites on the other, because the media, in cases where there are no political differences among elites, reproduce the consensus view without much questioning. This explanation, in fact, emphasizes the ethno-national character of the media from these two countries, because it shows that their reporting depends primarily on ethno-national political elites. Such a situation truly leaves a lot of room for the political utilization of the media, by which politicians can continue with the realization of their nationalistic

politics. At the same time, this means that without further democratization and transformation of the political sphere, we can hardly expect significant professional shifts within the world of media and journalism.

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**THE CASE OF DOBROVOLJAČKA:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE SERBIAN AND  
BOSNIAN-HERZEGOVINIAN DAILY PRESS**

*Karmen ERJAVEC*

Media experts agree that in contemporary societies media are one of the main factors in creating knowledge on history and human memory. Media produce simplified and easily comprehensible histories, not interesting solely for everyday media consumption, but also for politics, which (ab)uses them for its own purposes of instrumentalization, for current political purposes, and for the mobilization of human masses (Assmann 2004). Applying Foucault (1995) to media studies, we come to see media's establishment of political memory as a certain hegemonic view of the past, which came out victorious in ensuring its prevailing position. Additionally, this may be studied as an ideological project that motivates and disseminates only those interpretations that confirm the hegemonic policy of truth about the past. Media (re)definitions of the past in post-war areas are in line with ideological discourses, which direct dealing with the war past, determining responsibility, and punishing war crimes, and are exploited by the political elites' interests. War crimes are particularly at stake for they carry a powerful political charge regarding present relations, determine the priorities and problems of a post-war society, and are thus often politically instrumentalized and used for ongoing political purposes in the media (Erjavec and Volčič 2009). Particularly unstable relations in divided regions, such as the Balkans, and societies such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia or B&H) are excellent venues for analyzing the relationship between media representation and political authority in the process of shaping history (Corcoran 2002). Uncovering the relationship between media texts and the authorities may show how, within the framework of public consciousness, only a specific truth on war crimes has been selected, monitored, instrumentalized, and legitimized, in such a manner so as to achieve public consensus and build ideological identity. All media representations are directly linked to the editorial policies of specific media, and which may depend on

their ownership (Splichal 2001). This is why it is important to uncover the relationship between media texts and the ownership of the media in question. For this reason, the key research questions of this paper relate to how the media represent an alleged war crime, to what extent the current character of national policies is implemented through media, and what goals are achieved in the current ethnonational auto- and hetero-representations through forming media pictures on war crimes and interpreting their prosecution.

The topic of this research is the current media representation of the case of Dobrovoljačka, covered in parallel by the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Serbian daily press from the moment the issuing of indictments in the given case was made public. We set out with the assumption that the interpretation of elements of national discourse may more successfully be carried out via media texts that, in comparison to electronic media, explicate the case in more detail and length, taking into consideration the media context in which reporting on Dobrovoljačka functions. Comparison of the methods of representation of the Dobrovoljačka case in the two countries reveals more of the current identity politics and national strategies than do the event itself and its history.

Critical discourse analysis (analysis of macro-propositions, the representation of social actors, and key words) was employed in order to determine the way in which the leading Serbian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian daily press represented the Dobrovoljačka case in the first half of 2009. Eight daily newspapers, four Bosnian (two from Sarajevo and two from Banja Luka) and four daily newspapers from Serbia were chosen for analysis in order to determine the way in which the media in these two countries, which were at war during the 1990s, represented the Dobrovoljačka case. The hypothesis is that there is a division in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian media landscape on ethnonational lines in the sense of differences of reporting between the Sarajevo (*Oslobođenje, Dnevni avaz*) and Banja Luka (*Glas Srpske, Nezavisne novine*)

daily newspapers. We further assume that there is homogeneity in the representation of the Dobrovoljačka case among Sarajevo daily newspapers on the one side and Serbian newspapers (*Večernje novosti*, *Blic*, *Politika*, *Danas*) on the other, with opposite content. We assumed that the ownership of certain media outlets influences the representation of the Dobrovoljačka case.

The first chapter presents the events of May 2 and 3, 1992, in Sarajevo, and continues with the representation of events concerning the Dobrovoljačka case in the first half of 2009. This is followed by a presentation of the chosen method and data. Finally, the key chapter presents the results of the analysis of media representations of the Dobrovoljačka case, which are placed within broader social practice in the last chapter.

## The Course of Events in the Dobrovoljačka Case

According to the ‘engineers’ of the state of Yugoslavia formed after the Second World War, the state was promised to move beyond the contradictions of nationalism and ethnic grouping. It was a project of political engineering based on the shared memory of the struggle against the Nazi regime in the area. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia comprised six different republics, and ‘Titoism’ was established on the assumption that economic and political homogenization would lead to the establishment of a pure working state (Woodward 1995). During the 1980s, following the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, once repressed nationalism began to rule over the life of the society.

In B&H, the combination of three ethnic groups – 43.7 percent Muslim, 31.3 percent Serb, 17.3 percent Croat, 7.7 percent ‘Yugoslav’ and ‘others’ (Statistical Bulletin 1991)

– was particularly susceptible to nationalist tensions. The pressure exerted on Bosnian Serbs and Croats to follow the ‘holy national call’ grew as Belgrade called for ‘all Serbs in a single state’ and Zagreb promoted Tudman’s Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica, Croatian, translator’s note) as the ‘planetary party of all Croats’ (MacDonald 2002, p. 123). During the first free multi-party elections in B&H organized in November 1990, three nationalist parties won, and permanent nationalist disputes were set off.

On June 25, 1992, Croatia and Slovenia proclaimed their independence. Two days later, the war in Slovenia started when the Yugoslav National Army (Jugoslavenska narodna armija, JNA, translator’s note), now become a Serb army under Milošević’s direct command, attempted to violently prevent Slovenian independence. In Croatia, Serb insurgents incited conflict with Croatian paramilitary forces, which was followed by yet another JNA intervention. As the fighting spread out from Croatian Eastern Slavonia to Krajina, and to B&H in April 1992, it was clear that Europe was witnessing the first great military conflict on its soil since the Second World War.

The problem of defining the beginning of the war in B&H is ideologically and politically linked with the issue of identifying the party guilty of the war, which means it is an issue tied to the question of who is to blame for the military incident on Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo. Interpretations of the example of Dobrovoljačka are used in justification of and as legitimization for incidents from the war, thus making it relevant for research and analysis. The case of Dobrovoljačka refers to the killing of 8 JNA soldiers<sup>1</sup> on Sarajevo’s

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<sup>1</sup> The reports on the crime cite 42 killed, 73 wounded, and 215 persons captured, but these reports refer to more than the attack on the JNA convoy on Dobrovoljačka Street. Both reports from Sarajevo and Belgrade talk of related incidents and armed conflicts near the Dom Armije, the Radnički univerzitet - Đuro Đaković movie theater (JNA Street, now Branilaca grada Street); Skenderija (Obala Vojvode Stepe, now Obala Kulina bana), and other locations.

Dobrovoljačka Street on May 3, 1992, during an attack launched by troops of the Territorial Defense, the Patriot League, and the Green Berets against a convoy of vehicles carrying officers of the Second Military District Command from the Bistrik barracks. A day earlier, on May 2, the JNA captured Alija Izetbegović, the President of the Republic of B&H (RB&H), his daughter, and Zlatko Lagumdžija, the Vice-President of the Bosnian government at the Sarajevo airport following their return from negotiations in Lisbon, and transported them to the barracks in Lukavica. Next, an agreement on exchanging President Izetbegović for the Commander of the Second Military District, Milutin Kukanjac, who was in the Bistrik barracks at the time, was reached. After the exchange agreement, on the afternoon of May 3, Izetbegović, his daughter, and Lagumdžija, were transported from Lukavica to Bistrik in an armored personnel carrier of UNPROFOR. Who it was that actually arranged the exchange, who bears the responsibility for the events that ensued, and who fired first, are the subject of the investigation. The attack occurred despite the agreement between representatives of the Republic of B&H and the SRY on the peaceful retreat of the JNA from the territory of B&H. Representatives of the political and military leadership of the Republic of B&H are suspects in the crime.

On February 25, 2009, the Interior Ministry of Serbia confirmed that the Police of Serbia had issued arrest warrants against the former members of the RB&H Presidency, Ejup Ganić, and 18 Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizens held as suspects of war crimes in Sarajevo. Serbian Interpol announced the issuing of an international arrest warrant on May 15, 2009, on the basis of which all persons listed on the warrant might be deprived of liberty in any of the 187 Interpol member states. The B&H Interpol Cooperation Bureau requested of the main Interpol bureau in Lyon to withdraw arrest warrants in connection with the Dobrovoljačka case against several persons from B&H. After the B&H request, the General Secretariat of Interpol in Lyon requested additional clarification with regard to the issuing of the arrest warrants. On July 3, 2009, the Interpol Secretariat informed all of its members that until the International Tribunal in The Hague provides an official opinion on the Dobrovoljačka case and before their legal department examines the

issue, the case would be removed from Interpol's database and not further processed. The diffuse arrest warrants issued by Serbian Interpol were thus withdrawn with a statement that no red arrest warrants would be issued until the legal dispute between B&H and Serbia is resolved.

## Methodology

In recent years, central research on media discourse has focused on a broad framework of critical discourse analysis dealing with various issues, such as projections of power via discourse, establishing dominance and inequality in discourse, the ideological background of discourse, and the connection between discourse and social change (Fairclough 1989, 1995a, 1995b; 2003; Fowler 1991; Fowler et al 1979; Van Dijk 1980, 1988, 1993, 1998). Hall defines critical discourse analysis as the analysis of 'mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out[,] and render intelligible the way society works' (Hall 1996, p. 26). These mental frameworks serve as guiding lights in the society in which we live, and seem key to cognitive survival in everyday living. For this reason, in order to determine the ideology in any sort of articulation, it is necessary to observe the manner in which it presents reality and the types of attitudes, values, beliefs, prejudices, and/or perspectives it encodes in text. We apply three key textual analyses in our research: analyses of macro-propositions, the representation of social actors, and key words.

Discourse semantics deals with meaning in the sense of 'propositions' (Brown and Yule 1983). A proposition is a conceptual structure consisting of a predicate and



one or more arguments. According to Van Dijk (1988), propositions are the least independent constructs of language and thought, usually expressed in a single sentence or clause. On the basis of propositions, Van Dijk (1980, 1988) introduces an analysis of thematic news organization. This hierarchical structure consists of (macro-)propositions that define the most important or most relevant piece of information in the text. The semantic macrostructure arises from local meanings of words according to macro rules, such as deletion, generalization, and construction. According to such rules, irrelevant details are left out, while the essence is tied into abstract meanings on a higher level or there is an establishment of constituents with different meanings for events or social concepts on a higher level. Thematic organization is directly connected to discourse schemata or so-called superstructures (Van Dijk 1980). In this study, a proposition is defined as the 'unit of an idea' in the form of one sentence, several sentences, a paragraph, or an entire news story. A macro-proposition is defined as a unit solely for the purpose of comparison. The most important or most relevant piece of information in an article is defined by applying the macro rules mentioned earlier. In newspaper articles on the same phenomenon, i.e. the Dobrovoljačka phenomenon, I have discovered macro-propositions that have either been relayed or are missing. In the process of news preparation, journalists construct reality in accordance with their own backgrounds, and ideological and political beliefs. Therefore, via macro-proposition analysis, I have come to find the manner in which the Serbian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian daily press determines and defines what happened on May 3, 1992, in Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo and what happened to the Dobrovoljačka case in the first half of 2009.

In order to determine media representations of the Dobrovoljačka case, I have analyzed the manner in which, in this case, principal social actors were presented, i.e. who was included in the domain of 'we' and who was positioned as 'they.' The basic functions of social representation of actors serve to affirm ideology by placing

them in a position contrasted with the ideology acting in opposition. It is precisely for these reasons that Hall's 'discourse of difference' is here defined as the most effective method of thinking via binary oppositions. Hall interprets 'discourses of difference' (1989, p. 913) as discourses that differentiate between 'we' and 'they.' Every group, for it to be defined as a group, must be differentiated from the Others – internally and externally. Any sort of identity, as Hall suggests, is primarily defined as the difference in relation to the Other. Such a meaning of 'we' and 'they' which implies identification with and differentiation from, and is not ontologically given but ideologically constructed, becomes clear via linguistic analysis. Nevertheless, since it seems so natural, the dichotomy of 'we' and 'they' is rarely brought into question. These are, however, concepts possessing the greatest power since they are 'taken for granted, for they have entered as such the language of speech' (Bourdieu 1977, p. 167). The construction of identity is a process of identification and description of the group an individual considers his or her own, and a differentiation with regard to others (Wodak 1996). This means that the identities of social actors in texts are largely constructed and defined through group membership, in which case the emphasis is placed on the representation of Others as different, deviant, or a threat. This research has shown how the analyzed daily press divides social actors between 'we' (victims in the case of Dobrovoljačka) and 'they' (the perpetrators, attackers, guilty parties), and how they are represented.

We have, in addition, analyzed the choice of key words in newspaper articles: how the daily press named the event of May 3, 1992 on Dobrovoljačka Street, and events related to the Dobrovoljačka case in the first half of 2009. The claim that the choice of words employed by journalists is in no sense arbitrary is broadly recognized. The certain choice is not merely the act of journalists alone, but also has to do with the society in which they live. Studies of the lexical choices of journalists and ideologies by Trew (1979) and Teo (2000) conclude that all perceptions incorporated into lexicalization involve ideology.

As is usual in critical discourse analysis, we interpret the results of the textual analysis within the context of discursive and social practices, emphasizing the possible influence of the daily newspapers' ownership on media representations of the Dobrovoljačka case.

## Database

The analysis comprises 191 newspaper articles published in 2009 by Serbian (*Večernje novosti*: 11 articles, *Politika*: 9 articles, *Danas*: 16 articles, *Blic*: 7 articles) and Bosnian (*Oslobodenje*: 34 articles, *Dnevni avaz*: 38 articles, *Nezavisne novine*: 27 articles, *Glas Srpske*: 49 articles) daily newspapers. Therefore, our sample includes all the articles published in the selected daily newspapers dealing with the case of Dobrovoljačka Street. The criteria employed in selecting the daily newspapers were readership and regional distribution (Džihana 2009). The selected and monitored daily newspapers are: (1) *Dnevni avaz* and (2) *Oslobodenje* from Sarajevo, and (3) *Glas Srpske* and (4) *Nezavisne novine* from Banja Luka in the Republika Srpska. We selected four of the most widely read and most influential daily newspapers from Serbia: (1) *Večernje novosti*, (2) *Politika*, (3) *Danas*, and (4) *Blic*.

According to T. Jusić (2004, pp. 74-76), *Dnevni avaz* is the daily newspaper with the highest circulation in B&H, published by the NIK Avaz publishing house. *Dnevni avaz* exerts significant influence on political life. To more or less a large extent, the newspaper supports the Bosniak national party SDA (*Stranka demokratske akcije*, Bosnian, Party for Democratic Action, translator's note), which has secured an increase in readership for the newspaper. Once the leading daily newspaper in B&H, *Oslobodenje* has lost both its popularity and readership and

has been unable to adapt to the post-war media market, even in spite of the assistance of its ownership structure set up under the leadership of a Slovenian financial investment group to regain its earlier market position. Since 2006, *Oslobođenje* has been under the majority ownership of Sarajevska pivara (*Sarajevska pivara postala je većinski vlasnik Oslobođenja* 2006). *Glas Srpske* has been under the majority ownership of the Nezavisne novine Consortium since March 2008 (*Glas Srpske prodan Nezavisnim novinama* 2008). In this sense, reporting by *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine* may be viewed as two sides of the same coin. According to Dragan Đoković (2004), *Večernje novosti* is the most popular daily newspaper in Serbia. The company is a joint-stock enterprise: 70 percent is under the private ownership of former and current employees of the company, and 30 percent is under the ownership of the state. The tabloid *Blic* is second on the list of best-ranked daily newspapers in Serbia with regard to circulation and readership, and is owned by the Swiss company Ringier Group (*Impresivni rezultati Ringiera u Srbiji* 2008). *Politika* is one of the oldest daily newspapers in the Balkans (dating back to 1904). 50 percent of its capital belongs to the German media group WAZ, and the remaining 50 percent is state capital (*Politika – novine u vlasništvu države* 2009). Like *Večernje novosti*, *Politika* largely supported the Milošević regime for an entire decade. *Danas* is a daily newspaper founded in mid-1997 after a group of disgruntled journalists from the journal *Naša borba* resigned the newspaper following a conflict with the private majority owner. Nowadays, *Danas* is a left-oriented media outlet promoting issues related to the former Yugoslavia, social democracy, and European integration. It is one of the rare media outlets supporting the activities of the non-governmental sector in Serbia in the area of human rights and minority protection. The newspapers is published and managed by Dan Graf Ltd. from Belgrade.

Three time periods in the first half of 2009 were chosen for analysis. The first concerns the time period from February 25 to March 1, 2009, during which there

appeared reports on the issuing of arrest warrants by the Serbian Interior Ministry against 19 B&H citizens suspected of war crimes in Sarajevo. The second period is from May 4 to 28, 2008, because it includes the commemoration of the anniversary of the events in Dobrovoljačka Street (May 4, 2009) and Interpol's announcement on issuing an international arrest warrant (May 15, 2009). The third period is from June 3 to 18, 2009, which includes reports on the fact that Interpol withdrew the warrants at the request of B&H (June 3, 2009).

We shall combine results of macro-propositions analysis, social actors representation analysis, and keyword analysis. Given that the research text is of limited scope, we shall present only the most typical examples by newspapers clippings. We first discuss the representation of the events of May 2 and 3, 1992, and provide the representation of the issuing of arrest warrants in the Dobrovoljačka case in the second portion of the text.

## Results

### How the Newspapers Represented the Events of May 2 and 3, 1992

The analyzed daily newspapers reported relatively little on the events of May 2 and 3, 1992 in Sarajevo in comparison with their reports on the issuing of arrest warrants by the Serbian Interior Ministry and Serbian Interpol against 19 B&H citizens. This is not to mean that the given events were of no interest to the aforementioned newspapers, but that the Dobrovoljačka case was most likely a well-covered media topic in the past, and thus readers were aware of the views of the newspapers on the case. A comparison of the propositions in all the

newspaper articles on the Dobrovoljačka case in the Bosnian and Serbian daily newspapers enables us to determine the basic differences in the definitions of what happened on May 2 and 3, 1992 in Sarajevo.

The social actors analysis showed that the Sarajevo daily newspaper *Oslobodenje* reported on the events primarily via statements by participants in the events coming exclusively from the Bosniak side: Ermin Švrkić, Bakir Alispahić, and Ejup Ganić. The macro-proposition analysis showed that on the basis of the articles, or the basic information that they provide, we may define the following macro-proposition: ‘The JNA General Kukanjac is to blame for the victims in Dobrovoljačka Street because he wanted the JNA to safely return to Lukavica with the captured Izetbegović. When the Bosniak side went in to defend the President, incidents causing the deaths of JNA troops occurred.’ The keyword analysis revealed that, to describe the events with casualties, the newspaper primarily employed the phrase ‘the deaths of JNA soldiers,’ e.g., as soon as in the title: ‘General Kukanjac to blame for the deaths of JNA soldiers’ (February 27, 2009) and the euphemistic ‘incident’ (see example below). The newspaper blamed the JNA for the attack, in addition to blaming General Kukanjac personally because he wanted the JNA to return to Lukavica by using President Izetbegović as a buffer, who they had captured a day earlier. The newspaper constructed the meaning that the JNA had no intention of releasing Izetbegović, which is most likely only a ‘manipulation.’ The role of the Bosniak forces is presented as ‘rescuing the president’ and ‘defending the state.’

‘We were defending Sarajevo on that day. We weren’t en route to attack Čačak, Šabac, Niš... We were defending the state, rescuing the president! We guarded both the cathedral and the church in Baščaršija. We had information that some people might harm them and then say we did it,’ said Švrakić Sr. Bakir Alispahić thinks his name is not on the list of the accused. It is more important, he says, to know that the Dobrovoljačka Street case has been prosecuted and led by the Court of B&H. Most importantly, he thinks, is that General Kukanjac is responsible for the victims in Dobrovoljačka. ‘His behavior led to the deaths of everyone in the convoy

that started from Bistrik. They left the barracks under the condition that President Izetbegović be transported to the B&H Presidency building. It was Kukanjac's idea to have them pass the Vrbanja Bridge where there were JNA checkpoints already set up. Therefore our ability to take Izetbegović back to the Presidency building would be close to nothing. Essentially, they wanted to exploit the president to return safely to Lukavica and keep him captured. Of course, we saw through the plan and the incident occurred where everyone's deaths were to be expected as we would have all died for the president,' Alispahić remembers. Ganić had already reminded that the JNA kidnapped Izetbegović that day, and that all who were rescuing him were 'guilty' for everything not ending up according to plan. A new manipulation. (Bećirović 2009, p. 7)

*Dnevni Avaz* described the event in three articles. The first cites a statement by Ejup Ganić, the war-time member of the Presidency of B&H, that he gave as comment on his name appearing on the Serbian police's arrest warrants list. The macro-proposition analysis shows that we can form the macro-proposition 'that on May 3, 1992, in Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo they were defending B&H and freeing the president, who was abducted earlier that day.' The matter in this case is a summarized interpretation of the events, including an expression with a powerful connotation, namely 'terrorist act,' used after September 11, 2001, in order to justify all means for the defense of the state, i.e. the nation (Erjavec and Volčič 2007). Although the daily papers themselves did not clearly name an enemy, it is clear from the context that the enemy is the JNA, or Serbs.

In a statement for *Dnevni Avaz*, Ganić yesterday said that the Serbs' list has names of all those who defended B&H. Namely, on May 2, 1992, a terrorist act was committed where the president of the state was abducted, the *rahmetli*<sup>2</sup> Alija Izetbegović. All of us who were saving the president, who was a symbol of the state, are now guilty for all of it not ending up according to plan. (Vele 2009, p. 12)

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<sup>2</sup> *Rahmetli* (Turkish) – late, deceased; an expression commonly used by Bosnian Muslims; translator's note.

*Dnevni Avaz* quoted Ejup Ganić once more several months later. The macro-proposition analysis reveals that Ganić then presented the event as ‘two army formations confronting each other on May 3, 1992, the B&H Territorial Defense and the JNA, which was the case many times later, when more people were killed, but this example is interesting for the Serbs, because they are disappointed that B&H did not fall under Milošević’s regime’s control.’ Such an interpretation of the events relativizes the Dobrovoljačka case by comparing it with countless other confrontations where more victims lost their lives. Another key fact is that Ganić presents the conflict as one of war, not pre-war or initiating war as it is presented by the Serbian daily papers, which shall be presented later in this text.

The war-time member of the Presidency of the Republic of B&H, Ejup Ganić, claims that two military formations came into conflict on Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo in May 1992, namely the Territorial Defense of B&H and the former JNA, and that on the occasion five or six people were killed. There were a thousand cases where military formations came into conflict and where more people were killed. Dobrovoljačka is interesting for them because they thought B&H would fall under the control of Slobodan Milošević, claims Ganić. (U Dobrovoljačkoj su se sukobile dvije formacije 2009, p. 4).

In the third article, *Dnevni Avaz* cites Avdo Hebib, the president of the Patriot League of B&H and an organizer of protests in Sarajevo against the warrants issued by Serbia against the 19 B&H citizens. On the basis of his statement we may form the following macro-proposition: ‘Since the JNA captured President Izetbegović, the Bosniak forces had to let it leave Sarajevo. On this occasion JNA soldiers fired at civilians, and the Bosniaks merely responded to the attack.’ This quote confirms that aforementioned purpose of the Bosniak forces, i.e. freeing the president. The analysis of social actors has shown that the key culprits in the event were JNA soldiers ‘armed to the teeth with snipers and in transporters,’ who fired at civilians first. If a reader of *Oslobodenje* did not know who fired first, this is clear for a reader of *Avaz*: the first to fire were members of the JNA, and thus they are to blame for the deaths of the soldiers from their own ranks, since the paper defines the initial firing as that which determines the blame.



Avdo Hebib ... remembered the events that took place 17 years ago at Bistrik when the JNA, commanded by the notorious General Milan Kukanjac, was leaving Sarajevo. Unfortunately, in front of this building the convoy that Kukanjac led left. The rahmetli president of B&H, Alija Izetbegović, was arrested at this time. To free him, we had to let Kukanjac and his army leave Sarajevo. However, this convoy, armed to the teeth with snipers and in transporters, started to fire at houses. A boy, Boris Midić, was wounded, and two houses of the Domić family were set ablaze, emphasized Hebib. (Dedajić 2009, p. 8)

*Nezavisne novine* cites many more sources than *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni Avaz* (also more than all the other Serbian daily papers) from both the Serbian and Bosniak sides. Like *Dnevni Avaz*, the paper quotes Avdo Hebib in reporting on the demonstrations against the issuing of the warrants. On the basis of his statement we may form a macro-proposition similar to that before, that ‘on May 3, 1992, members of the Army of the RB&H attacked the convoy only after JNA soldiers shot first.’ The key message of this piece of information is that members of the Army of the RB&H did not fire first, but defended themselves.

According to his words, members of the RB&H [Army] attacked the convoy only after there were shots from the JNA convoy. (Muminović 2009, p. 11)

The Banja Luka paper also covered the event three weeks earlier when reporting on the commemoration of its 17th anniversary. The paper then used a statement from Dušan Kovačević, a former JNA colonel who participated in the event, to present the events on May 3, 1992. From his statement we may form a macro-proposition wherein ‘the Bosniak forces, despite the agreement on the retreat from Sarajevo and international guarantees ambushed the JNA and thus anticipated the war in B&H.’ Therefore, the daily clearly states that the blame for the event and the war in B&H lies with the Bosniak forces, although it does not clearly name them. Members of the JNA are presented as innocents for being attacked in an ambush. Several lines before the following quote, the description of the events is stated as a ‘war crime.’

Dušan Kovačević, a former JNA colonel who was in the convoy retreating from Sarajevo that was attacked, said that the attackers anticipated the war in B&H with this event, which set off,

as he said, a general HAJKA against Serbs in Sarajevo. 'There was an agreement with guarantees from the international community, the United Nations, and the European Community, and guarantees from the Presidency of the then-Republic of B&H that we would leave Sarajevo as prisoners in a convoy. We trusted the agreement, which was violated. The soldiers were killed in an ambush', recounted Kovačević. (Domazet 2009, p. 7)

The analysis of macro-propositions indicates that *Glas Srpske* does not represent the course of events in detail, but from the perspective of Serb participants in the events and from other Serb sources regularly repeats one and the same message, namely that 'Bosniak forces attacked the JNA in an ambush and thus anticipated the war in B&H despite the agreement on retreating from Sarajevo and international guarantees.' The analysis of social actors revealed that *Glas Srpske* clearly states that the attack of the Bosniak forces on the JNA started the 'HAJKA against Serbs' and 'the war in B&H.' In this way the paper's message is that Bosniaks started the war in B&H.

A former JNA colonel, Dušan Kovačević, who was in the convoy that was attacked, said that in this event the attackers declared war in B&H, which initiated a general HAJKA against Serbs in Sarajevo. 'There was an agreement, with guarantees from the international community, the United Nations, the European Community, and the Presidency of the then-Republic of B&H that those of us in the convoy, as prisoners, would leave Sarajevo. We trusted the agreement, which was broken,' stated Kovačević. (Domazet 2009, p. 5)

Unlike Bosnian daily papers, Serbian, or to be more precise, Belgrade daily newspapers, study and interpret the events of May 2 and 3, 1992 in detail. The analysis of macro-propositions has shown that *Danas* states as a key piece of information a statement by the Minister of Labor and Veteran and Disabled Persons Affairs of the RS, Rade Ristović, on the basis of which we may form a macro-proposition according to which 'the RB&H government and the international community cheated the JNA, which was defending Yugoslavia, and thus enabled the deaths of JNA forces.' The analysis of social actors revealed that, in the example, the international community was equally accused for being on the side of the 'others,' the enemies, as well as the government of the RB&H. The JNA was presented as innocent and as the defender of Yugoslavia.

The Minister of Labor and Veteran and Disabled Persons Affairs of the RS, Rade Ristović, said that ‘soldiers and aldermen, who were on a mission for the homeland because they defended the former Yugoslavia, had no inkling that on May 2 and 3, 1992, they would be cheated by the then-Republic of B&H and foreign forces that promised them peaceful evacuation from Sarajevo. The deception was obvious, and 42 soldiers would be mortally wounded, while 73 were wounded and 215 captured and brutally tortured in Sarajevo camps,’ said Ristović. (Beta 2009, p. 12)

Macro-proposition analysis showed that *Politika* described the event in even greater detail. The paper allowed a JNA officer, Ljubodrag Stojadinović, to express his view on the event. He wrote an article in the first person that was separate from readers’ letters, convoys, or comments, but which enabled a personal view of the event and its interpretation. From the article, written incoherently (which is why we must record it at some length) because the author describes the situation in a temporally disjointed manner, we may form the macro-proposition that ‘the JNA did a stupid thing and captured Izetbegović with the intention of safely retreating from Sarajevo, and when a day later the tip of the convoy with Kukanjac, Izetbegović, and MacKenzie crossed Dobrovoljačka Street, the soldiers and officers were massacred.’ In this example the JNA again is represented as innocent, even naïve, for believing that it could retreat with the captured Izetbegović and in doing so commit ‘a major stupidity,’ as the social actors analysis showed. Members of the Bosniak forces or ‘B&H’s new forces’ are marked dually. The author is more cautious in the relationship with Bosniaks who were former JNA members and dubs them ‘erring commanders,’ and names the remaining Bosniaks who participated in the event criminals and villains. Keyword analysis showed that the entire event was marked as a ‘massacre’ committed by Bosniak forces against members of the JNA. In order for the author to negatively mark the situation prior to the attack, he uses Turkisms (‘*halakanje*,’ ‘*šenlučenje*,’ ‘*bašibozuk*’),<sup>3</sup> which create

<sup>3</sup> Halakanje – loud, boisterous conversation; šenlučenje – celebration; bašibozuk (or bashi-bazouk) – (lit. damaged head, meaning leaderless) an irregular soldier of the Ottoman Army (translator’s note).

the impression that the actors of the event were foreigners, uncivilized people, non-Europeans.

Otherwise, the JNA general was certain the 'B&H's new forces' were unable to harm him. Every night, until as long as the end of April, there were halakanje and šenlučenje towards the command in Dobrovoljačka, but the military police easily broke up such bashi-bazouk. ... General Branko Čado, who happens to be the chief of the contact group with UNPROFOR, hinted at an attack on the command and advised me to move from the Hotel Europe, since the Sandžaklijas were preparing to liquidate Serb officers. (...)

There is more light to be shed on the role of Jovo Divjak, a Belgrade native and JNA colonel, who became an officer of the B&H army and was actively involved in the attack on the convoy of vehicles of the military district command. According to some versions, he led the operational part of the action with the gang of Jusuf Prazina, a two-bit criminal, later killed somewhere in Western Europe. There are claims that Divjak even tried to calm Prazina down. In the meantime, disarmed JNA soldiers and officers were lying down on the asphalt, and Prazina ordered all of them to stay motionless or he would shoot them in the head. So he killed two soldiers, then colonel Obradović, the chief of the health administration and shot repeatedly colonel Enes Tas, who barely survived his wounds. (...)

It must be said that the JNA's General Staff committed a major stupidity by ordering the arrest of Alija Izetbegović in Butmir. According to this exceptional idea, Alija was a hostage and guarantee that the convoy would pass unobstructed, and that all would end peacefully. But when the front part of the convoy with the armored vehicle carrying Kukanjac, General Louis MacKenzie, and Izetbegović passed the massacre started. (...)

Until judge Milan Dilparić's ruling, the soldiers and officers from Dobrovoljačka, Skenderija, and the Sarajevan barracks were the innocent, forgotten victims of criminals and their erring commanders. (Stojadinović 2009, p. 11)

Macro-proposition analysis showed that *Večernje novosti* described the event in great detail, whereupon they assumed information from the feuilleton of their journalist Svetozar Đonović. The article allows us to form the macro-proposition that 'Izetbegović cheated the JNA because the Green Berets committed a planned massacre of the JNA.' The supplement provided not a single hint of the fact that the JNA captured Izetbegović, and made it seem that Izetbegović voluntarily marched at the front of the JNA convoy. Social actors analysis showed that the convoy is

represented as entirely innocent. The Bosniak side was represented as ‘atrocious’ and ‘criminal,’ Izetbegović as corrupt for promising the retreat while in essence preparing a slaughter. Keyword analysis showed that the event itself is represented as a ‘massacre,’ ‘hell,’ ‘atrocious murder and injury.’ The words used describe extremely negative and inhuman events, indicative of beastlike and unnatural behavior.

The crime in Dobrovoljačka occurred during the evacuation of the JNA convoy from the Second District command to Lukavica. The retreat operation was arranged with the mediation of the Peacekeeping Mission of the UN. The agreement to a peaceful retreat from Sarajevo unfortunately transformed into a massacre of young regulars and their elders.

In the building of the blocked Second District Command in Dobrovoljačka Street 92, General Milutin Kukanjac (the District Commander) and the President of B&H at the time, Alija Izetbegović, agreed to take a convoy of 25 vehicles, carrying over 200 soldiers, officers, and civilians, out to Skenderija. The convoy was already formed, and Izetbegović was to be, according to the assessment of the military command, the guarantee that the soldiers would not be fired at. (...)

Kukanjac and Izetbegović boarded the UNPROFOR transporter and the convoy set off to Lukavica in the early evening. It turned out, however, that had Izetbegović deceived the generals, that the attack by the ‘Green Berets’ was planned, and their rifles were already pointed. It followed as soon as Alija left the convoy in Skenderija.

It was like a travelling on a road in hell that paper’s journalist, Svetozar Đonović, who was in the convoy, witnessed on in the *Novosti* feuilleton from May 11-24, 1992. (N.N. 2009, p. 12)

*Blic* represents the events by presenting the indictment. In doing so, the paper first lists the individual indictments, after which, without presenting the situation, it cites the indictment: the detailed orders. The macro-proposition analysis has revealed that we may, on the basis of the text, form the macro-proposition that ‘Bosniak forces breached the agreement on the peaceful retreat of the JNA, international law, and the Geneva Conventions, and attacked young recruits.’ Social actors analysis showed that in this way the JNA was represented as an innocent group and, on the other hand, the Bosniak forces as shrewd and criminal. Keyword analysis revealed that the event was described as an ‘attack’ and a ‘crime.’

- Using illicit combat means, the defendants murdered a minimum of 18 persons. As high-ranking political and military officials, by issuing orders the defendants planned and organized perfidious attacks on buildings and members of the JNA in Sarajevo, specifically on the Military Hospital, on the Dom JNA, on the ambulance vehicle convoy, and the convoy of the Second District Command on Dobrovoljačka Street. By doing so they violated the agreement between representatives of B&H and SRY on the peaceful retreat of the JNA from the territory of B&H as well as the rules of international law and the Geneva Conventions – citing the request for conducting an investigation filed by the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor’s Office.

The request cites that the defendants radioed in orders to attack the army convoy on Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo.

- Order to all units: Destroy all moving enemy vehicles! Prepare combustible compounds and set fire to all! Block the unit and hit them immediately. Knock down trees so they can’t move an inch. No access to UNPROFOR vehicles until the president is in the Presidency. Immediately, immediately capture all! All units in the vicinity of Dobrovoljačka take action against this army! - so the orders of the defendants are cited. Members of the Territorial Defense, the Patriot League, the Green Berets, special police units, and other paramilitary units participated in the attacks on the young recruits in Sarajevo. (Cvijić 2009, p. 15)

### **How did the papers represent the issuing of arrest warrants by the Police of Serbia and Serbian Interpol against citizens of B&H suspected of war crimes in Sarajevo and Interpol’s subsequent withdrawal of the warrants?**

The papers analyzed reported more and in greater detail on the issuing of the arrest warrants by the Police of Serbia and Serbian Interpol for the former member of the Presidency of the RB&H, Ejup Ganić, and 18 B&H citizens suspected of war crimes in Sarajevo, and Interpol’s subsequent withdrawal of the warrants, than on the events from 1992.

Macro-proposition analysis showed that *Oslobodenje* defined the issuing of the warrants primarily through statements by the Minister of Security of B&H and reports on demonstrations against the warrants organized in Sarajevo. From different texts we may form the macro-proposition that ‘the issuing of the Serbian and international arrest warrants was a political act intended to undermine the sovereignty of B&H and

destabilize the political situation in B&H with the B&H judiciary already working on the case while the Serbian judiciary refuses to deliver evidence.’ Social actors analysis showed that the Serbian judiciary was represented as manipulative and politicized, a judiciary that, with nationalist intentions, refuses to cooperate with the B&H judiciary, but instead indicts the wartime leadership of B&H and thus encroaches on the sovereignty of B&H.

The B&H Security Minister, Tarik Sadović, stated yesterday that Sarajevo sent a protest letter to Interpol’s Headquarters in Lyon with a request for the withdrawal of Serbia’s international arrest warrants against 19 persons from the wartime political and military leadership of B&H in the case of Dobrovoljačka Street, for violating Article 3 of Interpol’s Statute, which explicitly prohibits that arrest warrants be issued if they are motivated by political, military, religious or racial reasons. (...) [H]e emphasized that the arrest warrant is a result of Serbia’s political intent to destabilize the political situation in B&H and to limit movement for people who represented the top of the military and political establishment of our country during the war. He rejected as unfounded the claims of the Republika Srpska that Serbia decided to act thus because there was no political will in Sarajevo to prosecute the Dobrovoljačka case. ‘I know for a fact that the Justice Minister of B&H, Bariša Čolak, sent a request several times to his colleague in Serbia with the appeal to direct the case to the B&H judiciary and to deliver all relevant evidence on the case.’ (Katana 2009, p. 6)

The continuous undermining of the sovereignty of B&H directed by and within the framework of [Tadić’s] politics (...) the indictments against the whole of the leadership of the Republic of B&H over the Dobrovoljačka case. (Bajrović 2009, p. 10)

The daily newspaper Dnevni Avaz mostly cites Bosniak politicians and Bosniak civil society representatives, and overall has, more so than *Oslobodenje*, a clearly formed attitude, which is seen from the explicit characterization of the event, that is not corroborated with statements. Macro-proposition analysis showed that from Avaz’s articles we may form the macro-proposition that ‘by way of an investigative process and indictments against B&H citizens, Serbia wishes to cover up its own responsibility for the aggression against B&H because this concerns a politically staged process, one over whose handling Serbia has no competence.’ *Avaz*’s attitude is that Serbia wishes

to reconstruct history. Keyword analysis showed that the court proceedings were represented as political, i.e. a nationalist act, which is often confirmed through characterizations such as that ‘they have still not given up on Milošević’s plan in Serbia’ (Vele 2009, p. 12). Serbian courts are represented as political and that, instead of hunting down Serbian criminals, prosecute B&H citizens.

The message that officials in Belgrade sent to Sarajevo by issuing arrest warrants against 19 Bosnian-Herzegovinian citizens, among whom are former members of the Presidency of the RB&H and the highest-ranking officer of the Army of the RB&H from the time, is unambiguous because the War Crimes Prosecutor’s Office is tasked with covering up Serbia’s responsibility for its aggression on B&H by staged processes. Instead of putting behind bars hundreds of ‘Scorpions,’ Red Berets, and members of paramilitary units that were on a crusade through our state and were classic murderers, executors of the plans of their political mentors and commanders, whose only goal was the creation of a Great Serbia, the Serbian judiciary rolled up its sleeves and went on an all-out witch hunt. (Sarač 2009, p. 3)

The macro-proposition analysis has shown that, out of all the papers analyzed, *Nezavisne novine* offered the most complete picture. The paper provided opinions from official sources, both from the Bosniak and the Serb (Belgrade and Banja Luka) sides, while also presenting its own attitude. From the supplements, which were mostly the statements of Bosniak politicians and representatives of non-governmental organizations, we may form the macro-proposition that ‘the Serb police illegally issued arrest warrants against B&H citizens, because Serbia is guilty for the war in B&H, which is proven by the verdict of the International Court of Justice for the genocide in B&H and its non-cooperation with the said court.’ Given that we are talking of the same sources, we may find similar representations of Serbian courts and the investigative process itself to those in *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni Avaz*: the Dobrovoljačka example concerns a reconstruction of history, Serbian courts are political, and this is why Serbia illegitimately started its investigation.

Member of the Presidency of B&H, Željko Komšić, requested yesterday the Council of Ministers of B&H to hold an emergency session over the arrest warrants against 19 B&H



citizens whom the judicial bodies of Serbia suspect of war crimes in Sarajevo. ... 'their illegal detention abroad and possible extradition to Serbia needs to be prevented.' ... Member of the Presidency of B&H, Haris Silajdžić, also reacted and pointed to Serbia's being the only state in the world that was found responsible of genocide by the International Court of Justice and has yet to fulfill its obligations as determined by this ruling. The SDA<sup>4</sup> announced that the 'issuing of the international warrants against 19 persons, among whom are the wartime members of the Presidency of B&H Ejup Ganić and Stjepan Kljuić represents a GRUBO violation/breach of international law by the Serbian judiciary.' (Čubro 2009, p. 8)

On the other hand, the papers cited Belgrade and Banja Luka sources. In addition to the piece of information saying that 'the war crimes judge of the District Court in Belgrade set time in detention and ordered the issuing of criminal arrest warrants for 19 B&H citizens for war crimes against the wounded, illegal killings of the enemy, and the usage of illicit means of combat,' they cited sources proving that the 'judiciary in B&H is political.' Citing Serb sources, *Nezavisne novine* portrayed a picture quite the opposite of the previous one: the judiciary in B&H is political. In this way they legitimized the Serbian investigation and warrant.

Branislav Dukić, the president of the War Camp Survivor's Association of the RS, told Bramertz that The Hague Tribunal and the Court, and the Prosecutor's Office of B&H, were political, and not courts of justice. 'The Serbs in The Hague were sentenced to 1,117 years, and Bosniaks to only 46 years. During the war, the reis-ul-ulema, along with Haris Silajdžić and Alija Izetbegović, visited the camps, even the Viktor Bubanj barracks, today's location of the Court of B&H that has held trials against 5,000 people, but these cases will never be prosecuted, nor will Ejup Ganić, about whom it is known that he ordered the killings of the JNA soldiers on Dobrovoljačka Street,' said Dukić. (Čubro 2009, p. 2)

Therefore, in addition to citing official sources, *Nezavisne novine* also presented their own attitude, which, unlike the other media analyzed, differed from the attitudes of the source. Macro-proposition analysis has shown that based on the articles we may

form the macro-proposition that the ‘War Crimes Prosecutor’s Office in Belgrade illegally opened up an investigation and issued arrest warrants against 19 high-ranking members of the former RB&H, which Sarajevo politicians view as a political process and interference with internal affairs, while at the same time B&H is itself to blame for not starting an investigation on the Dobrovoljačka case sooner.’ *Nezavisne novine* represents the case as a conflict between Belgrade and Sarajevo. Keyword analysis revealed that the events in relation to the indictments and the reactions of all sides are evaluated as a ‘political war’ between ruling Sarajevo politicians on one side, and those of Belgrade and Banja Luka on the other.

The attack on members of the JNA on Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo at the beginning of the past war in B&H turned in the last few days into a veritable political war between Sarajevo and Belgrade. The Special Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor in Belgrade started an investigation and issued arrest warrants against 19 high-ranking political, military and police officials of the former RB&H. Officials in Sarajevo have responded to the investigation and the issued warrants by calling it a political process and interference with the internal affairs of B&H. ... This is the task for the investigative bodies of B&H, which are unfortunately several years late in starting this investigation. The story about the attack on the JNA convoy in Dobrovoljačka has become current from time to time over the last dozen years. All the while, domestic prosecutor’s offices undertook no action, leaving space for Serbia to start an investigation into this case. (Čubro 2009, p. 7)

Among all the papers analyzed, *Glas Srpske* published the most articles on the investigation and the arrest warrants in the Dobrovoljačka case and writes on them in the most detail. Unlike *Nezavisne novine*, *Glas Srpske* represented only the Serb side, and comments on its Bosniak sources with an entirely negative connotation. In its numerous articles on the topic, *Glas Srpske* primarily told its readers that ‘the investigative process in the example of Dobrovoljačka from the side of the War Crimes Prosecutor’s Office in Serbia is legitimate because the B&H Prosecutor’s Office is political and has intentionally disabled investigation into the crime.’ The judicial bodies of B&H are represented as political. Bosniak politicians, and particularly the Bosniak member of the Presidency of B&H Haris Silajdžić and the

Security Minister Tarik Sadović, are represented as the ‘guardians of war crimes suspects.’ The paper represents them as ultimately nationalist politicians who ‘fell asleep in the early nineties.’ (Dobrić 2009, p. 4)

The spokesperson of the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of Serbia, Bruno Vekarić, said that the Office has been collecting evidence on the crime against the JNA’s soldiers since 2006 and delivering it to the Office of the Prosecutor of B&H, but that they decided to start proceedings themselves after seeing that it is obstructed in B&H. (Vekarić 2009, p. 1)

Macro-proposition analysis has shown that, unlike other daily papers, *Glas Srpske* precisely reports on halting Interpol’s warrants in the Dobrovoljačka case: ‘Interpol is selective and voluntaristic for withdrawing the issuing of the arrest warrants for war crimes against members of the JNA in 1992.’ Thus, according to social actors analysis, Interpol is represented as biased and on the side of the enemy.

The Chief of the National Central Interpol Bureau in Belgrade, Miloš Oparnica, in a letter sent to the General Secretary of Interpol in Lyon, Ronald Noble, emphasizes that this institution has shown, by halting and reviewing the arrest warrants in the Dobrovoljačka case, that it applies selectivity and voluntarism in its work. The Interpol General Secretariat in Lyon halted the request of Interpol Belgrade to issue arrest warrants against 13 persons suspected of war crimes against members of the JNA in 1992 on Dobrovoljačka Street in Sarajevo until they are reviewed by the office for legal affairs. (Maunaga and Bašić 2009, p. 3)

Most Serbian daily newspapers, in addition to reports on the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of Serbia’s starting an investigation and Serbian police and Interpol issuing arrest warrants, primarily wrote on the politicization of the courts in B&H and the legitimacy of Serbian courts to prosecute the Dobrovoljačka case. Macro-proposition analysis showed that the key piece of information for the journal *Politika* is that ‘Serbia is able to prosecute the suspects for the crime in Dobrovoljačka Street because the B&H Prosecutor’s Office has not launched an investigation, although the Serbian Prosecutor’s Office delivered the evidence.’ This message is exactly opposite to the one published by *Dnevni Avaz*, where the Serbian judiciary failed to cooperate with that of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Politika*, as social actor analysis reveals,

explicitly represented the B&H judiciary as political and intentionally refusing to cooperate with Serbian prosecutors and launch investigations into crimes committed against Serb victims, and represented the Serbian judiciary as non-political and compelled to achieve justice for Serb victims:

Serbia has the right to prosecute the suspects for the crimes on Dobrovoljačka Street, more so due to the fact that, as far as it seems, the Prosecutor's Office and Court of B&H have taken no concrete steps with regard to this case, although the War Crimes Prosecutor's Office of Serbia delivered evidence on the crime in question two years ago. (Marić 2009, p. 9)

Macro-proposition analysis showed that *Večernje novosti* primarily wrote on how 'the criminals [responsible for] the massacre of soldiers and officers of the JNA on Dobrovoljačka Street shall finally be prosecuted in Serbia. In B&H this would never happen because the courts in B&H are political.' Keyword analysis showed that the paper highly explicitly employed expressive words and phrases such as the statement that those responsible for the massacre shall 'finally meet justice face to face.' The daily also founds its arguments on the legitimacy of prosecuting the case in Serbia with the attitude that the judiciary in B&H is political because it is 'reserved for Serbs only' (E.V. N. 2009, p. 13).

The decision by the District Court in Belgrade on launching an investigation into the war crimes on Dobrovoljačka Street restored somewhat forgotten hopes that those responsible for this act would finally be brought face to face with justice. The Serbian police have issued an arrest warrant for 19 persons from the territory of B&H suspected of participation in the atrocious killings and wounding of over 110 soldiers and officers in May 1992. (N. N. 2009, p. 12)

Macro-proposition analysis showed that *Blic* too writes that 'the competency of Serbian courts is not in dispute because Serbia has an obligation to uncover the truth where there were many Serbs killed.' Although the paper's stand is that the courts must determine the truth in cases where so many people were hurt, from the context we may discern that this primarily refers to Serb victims and that, in essence, the truth on the arrest warrants in the Dobrovoljačka case is already entirely clear: the highest

rank of Bosniak politics is to blame. Social actors analysis showed that the JNA, i.e. Serb forces, are entirely innocent, i.e. that they are victims.

Our competency is not in dispute. We have an obligation to determine the truth in cases where so many people were hurt. (Ilić 2009, p. 16)

Macro-proposition analysis showed that, although the daily newspaper *Danas* predominantly cites previously mentioned Serb sources on the basis of which we may form similar macro-propositions stating that the courts in B&H are biased, in one article we may read a distanced viewpoint towards both sides: ‘There is mistrust in judicial bodies both on the Sarajevo and Belgrade sides, and both believe in the political instrumentalization of the judiciary from the other side.’ Among all of the Belgrade daily papers, only in one article by *Danas* were the readers provided with a view of both sides.

International arrest warrants against persons suspected of war crimes against prisoners in the Dobrovoljačka case have been issued in Serbia. The member of the Presidency of B&H reacted promptly, demanding that warrants be issued for two former presidents of the SRY. The deep mutual distrust in judicial institutions and doubts over their political instrumentalization have yet again been confirmed. Much like the entire political class of the Republika Srpska, with whom Serbia nurtures special relations, sees the Court of B&H as an institution that prosecutes only Serbs, so Sarajevo has no faith in the prosecution in Serbia and sees in the warrants the intent of further destabilizing B&H. (N. N. 2009, p. 7)

## Analysis of Social Practice and Conclusion

A critical analysis demands that the results of textual analysis are always placed in a wider frame of discursive and social practice (Fairclough 1989, 2005a, 2005b, 2003). Although we have partially already done so by way of textual analysis, we now wish to focus further on answering the question of the current character of national politics implemented through the media and what goals in current ethnonational auto- and hetero-representation are achieved through forming the media picture of war crimes and the interpretation of their prosecution. Before we proceed, let us take a look at the key results of the textual analysis.

The textual analysis has shown that, on a macro-semantic level, we have two opposing interpretations by newspapers divided along ethnonational lines. The Sarajevo dailies *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni Avaz* more or less homogeneously represent the event on May 3, 1992, such that Bosniak forces were defending the President of the RB&H Alija Izetbegović, who was captured a day earlier by the JNA, and in doing so, were defending B&H. When the JNA soldier convoy drove on Dobrovoljačka Street, the JNA began to fire first, and thus it is guilty of the attack and the deaths of JNA troops. The Banja Luka daily *Glas Srpske* and all the Serb dailies analyzed, or more precisely, the Belgrade newspapers, likewise more or less homogeneously represented the event. Other than *Politika*, most of them neglect the significance of Izetbegović's abduction. If a reader reads the articles in these newspapers, she or he will find not a single sign hinting at the fact that the abduction ever took place. The

newspapers claim that the Bosniak side attacked JNA troops, who merely wanted to leave Sarajevo, with premeditation. The event is marked as a massacre, the beginning of the hunt for Serbs, and the beginning of the war in B&H. The Banja Luka daily *Nezavisne novine* gives both of these representations.

The results indicate that the analyzed media are attempting to ideologically and politically reconstruct history. The daily press is waging a battle for which truth on Dobrovoljačka shall become the only truth. At the same time, they employ a strategy of ‘recontextualization’ (Fairclough 2003, p. 33) of the events, given that certain elements of the event have been omitted, inserted, or further developed. Since we do not know the ‘final’ or ‘real’ truth on the Dobrovoljačka case, based on the media representation we may only claim a key media strategy: the analyzed daily newspapers have placed the cause and consequences of the given event within different points of departure. Thus the Sarajevo daily newspapers at the outset place the abduction of Izetbegović, and in some articles provide the broader social context of Sarajevo in the sense that Sarajevo had by then already experienced its first attack and besiegement as evidence of the nationalist aspirations of the Milošević regime. As a key cause the paper cites the fact that the first to start firing were the JNA troops. This leads the readers to the conclusion that the attack was a legitimate defense of B&H and President Izetbegović. On the other hand, Serb daily newspapers start out from the event itself, and claim that the Bosniaks attacked first and that they were ready in advance, and that the Serbs merely wanted to retreat from Sarajevo. For the Serb media this massacre created a breaking point which caused the war in B&H. Such a viewpoint leads readers to conclude that the event in question was a crime and that the Bosniaks started a war in which Serbs only defended themselves. The battle for the point of the departure of the war is a key strategy in the political legitimation of the war in the prevailing world media representation of war. Thus, for example, Griffin (2004) writes that the key strategy of American media representations of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was to present them as having

started exclusively with the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, and to keep silent about earlier wars, conflicts, and other causes, e.g. the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, etc.

The analysis of reports on the investigation and arrest warrants provided a very similar picture. The Sarajevo media attempted to prove that Serbia had no competency over prosecuting the Dobrovoljačka case because in doing so it interfered with the internal affairs of B&H, and that its judiciary was political for wanting to cover up through these proceedings its own responsibility for aggression in the war given that, according to the evidence, Serbia is to blame for the war in B&H. The Serb judiciary, in the hands of politics, is continuing the politics of the Milošević regime. As far as the process itself is concerned, the Sarajevo daily newspapers write that the Serbian judiciary wanted no cooperation with their Bosnian-Herzegovinian counterpart, and is only now starting the process and issuing arrest warrants. On the other side, *Glas Srpske* and all the Belgrade media (except *Danas*, the only among all the Belgrade daily newspapers to cite the views of both sides) wrote on the legitimacy of the Serbian judiciary for prosecuting the Dobrovoljačka case because the Bosnian-Herzegovinian judiciary is political and reserved for cases concerning Serbs only, and for refusing to cooperate with Serbian judicial bodies, which sent it evidence material. The B&H judiciary is probably in the hands of nationalist Bosniak politicians. Such political accusations via the media speak to the fact that the media are not merely fighting over interpretations of history, but reflect the current battle among the states on which state continues to demonstrate nationalist/paternalistic ideology, which state's judiciary is independent, what their relationships to international institutions are, etc.

Although the results show that the newspapers in the region represented the Dobrovoljačka case according to an ethnonational key, we must warn of the fact that the Banja Luka newspaper *Nezavisne novine* reported on both sides. This may be



interpreted through the fact that, in essence, *Nezavisne novine* were set up as a newspaper covering the whole of the territory of B&H from nearly its very beginning. The newspaper has offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka, as well as a correspondent office from Mostar. In this sense, it is the only newspaper in B&H with such access. The newspaper approached the event primarily as a conflict between Sarajevo and Belgrade, and not as a conflict between Sarajevo and all Serbs.

We also cannot unanimously claim that ownership of the daily newspapers influences their content. There are no relevant differences in representation between the Sarajevo daily newspaper *Oslobođenje*, owned by a local brewery, and the Sarajevo daily *Dnevni Avaz*, owned by NIK Avaz. There are no relevant differences between the Belgrade daily newspapers, although they are owned by Swiss, German, private local firms, or the state. This may be interpreted as meaning that changes in ownership do not necessarily mean a change in content, because it is possible that different owners advocate the same ideologies or political options. Homogenized representation is most likely caused by the more or less consensus views of the Serb elites, on the one hand, and Bosniak elites on the other, of the Dobrovoljačka case. Namely, when there are no relevant differences between political elites, then the media reproduce their views without significant interference (Hartley 1989). We may also claim that homogenized representation by the Sarajevo journals is most likely caused by the fact that the suspects this time around were the highest-ranking state officials, many of whom retained a very positive public image in the years following the war, e.g. General Jovan Divjak, member of the Presidency Stjepan Kljujić, etc.

We may conclude that such simplified media representations of the Dobrovoljačka case are politically instrumentalized and employed for current political purposes, since the politicians are well aware of the fact that those who have power over the past and rule over it have power over the understanding of the present. In a narrow sense, the interest in this is surely party-political (Which party presents itself as

guardians of national and state interests?), and nationalist in a broader sense (Which nation is bad/good? Who was the aggressor and who was the winner in the war?). Finally, we must warn that such political instrumentalization of the past may have serious consequences for the existing social order, since it turns the present into a stage in which the problems of the past are resolved retroactively (Žižek 2000). By relativizing war crimes the horrors and victims of war are negated, certain basic human values are brought into question, and thus the possible social injustices of the present and future are justified.

This article is a contribution to existing studies on media mobilization of memory among various groups in the area of the former Yugoslavia, which continuously re-articulates and guards division on a national basis (Volčič 2007). The analysis shows that the media articulate contemporary events in accordance with the interpretation of past events and create events that support national divisions and legitimize the interpretation of the events of war.

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**THE CASE OF VUKOVAR:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF REPORTS ON TRIALS  
FOR WAR CRIMES COMMITTED IN VUKOVAR IN 1991  
IN THE HAGUE AND BELGRADE**

*Predrag MARKOVIĆ and Katarina SUBAŠIĆ*



The murder of more than 200 people at the Ovčara agricultural estate near Vukovar in November 1991 was the first mass war crime in the wars that broke out during the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition to becoming a symbol of Croatian suffering during the 1991-1995 war in Croatia, it was one of the first crimes for which the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague issued indictments against officers of the former Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslavenska narodna armija*, JNA). Mile Mrkšić, Miroslav Radić, and Veselin Šljivančanin, better known as the Vukovar Three, were brought before the ICTY and prosecuted. The Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of the Republic of Serbia, established in 2003, likewise issued the first indictment against 18 members of territorial defense and paramilitary formations suspected of the crime. The two trials were conducted virtually at the same time and attracted different media attention. This research deals with an analysis of the reports of four leading daily newspapers in Croatia and Serbia on both trials for war crimes committed at the Ovčara agricultural estate.

## The Interpretative and Methodological Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Reports on the Crime in Ovčara

It cannot be said that the destructive role of the media in the conflict in the former Yugoslavia has not attracted adequate attention. The bias in war reports by media

under direct and indirect state control, as well as independent organs, expressed by the selection of information, their biased interpretation, appropriate contextualization, numbing repetitiveness, or direct deceit, was recognized as early on as the start of the war as a key weapon. A sizable number of studies comprising both empirical research on the agitating language of war reports and the general function of the media in creating and maintaining parallel realities, which favored the prolonging and heightening of the conflict, testify to the effect of fighting on the 'media front' (Bugarski 1994, Čolović 1994, Tompson 1995). Due to lack of space, we shall not list many of the studies on this topic, but some of them shall be mentioned in the remainder of this text. These studies, as well as those conducted somewhat later (Slapšak 1997, Milošević 1997, Lenkova 1998, Denič 2002, Nenadović *et alia* 2002, Kurspahić 2003), mainly point to the conclusion that the propaganda hurricane ravaging Yugoslavia was caused by the interests of ruling elites who, having opted for the war option, created an atmosphere of exclusion favoring certain chosen goals. All aspects of the media war – stereotypization and creating a negative image of the other – were sidetracked due to the parceling of the post-Yugoslav media space after the war and the subsequent loss of interest in neighboring countries. One domain, however, represented 'the continuation of war by other means,' namely reports on war crimes trials. The legal leftovers of the wars for Yugoslav heritage, personified in the many proceedings for war crimes committed in these conflicts before international and national courts, represent a media domain that clearly shows remnants of war reports. They are reflected in the 'Rashomon-esque' image of war crimes trials created by media organs of different post-Yugoslav states. An exclusivity presenting 'ours' as unjustly stigmatized heroes and 'theirs' as insufficiently convicted demons appears as an expected reflex of wartime propaganda. More serious methodologies of discourse analysis (Jäger 1993, Wodak 2001, Chilton 2004) treat this issue not even as a serious stumbling block, but rather as a pseudo-problem – a case study in applied propaganda (Isaković 1991, Šušnjić 1999) that dissolves in the face of the elementary comparative method.

Cases that were the subjects of multiple trials by different court instances, such as the crime in Vukovar, are more challenging research material. On the one hand, three senior officers of the Yugoslav People's Army were brought before The Hague Tribunal, charged with crimes committed during the fall of Vukovar. On the other hand, the Serbian War Crimes Chamber in Belgrade prosecuted 18 persons accused of direct executions. The indictments concerned the same events, in the same place, and at the same time, but they are essentially different. While Mile Mrkšić, Veselin Šljivančanin, and Miroslav Radić were accused of crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war, and breaches of the Geneva Convention (ICTY 2004), the accused in Belgrade were prosecuted for war crimes against prisoners of war (TRZ 2005). This legal panopticon was partially overcome by the exchange of some evidence material between the international and national judiciaries, but the gap nevertheless remained. This in itself complicated reporting on these processes, with information available from several sources at the disposal of reporters. The phenomenon, observed in other legal contexts (Osiel 1997, McCormack 1997), is distinguished by a particular fervor in post-conflict environments with ongoing rivalries over discursive primacy of the image of the past. The rivalry grows into a bitter struggle over attempts to interpret the results of the courts' activities, the authority of which threatens to contest the established narrative. The results of the activities of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia are thus either supported with a special passion (Wilson 2005, Orentlicher 2008) or particularly contested (Čavoški 2001).

The activities of the international court have created a new front of polarized reporting on the prosecution of the Vukovar crimes in which tensions between the results of international court proceedings and local narratives have overshadowed inter-national reporting exclusivity. This complicates the basic reporting dichotomy of 'ours' and 'theirs' and demands a multilayered content analysis dealing with reports on closely linked cases whose media interpretation has remained divided both in Serbia and

Croatia. Therefore, the goal of this study is to answer the following question: Why do reports on a crime whose ‘head’ is tried in The Hague and whose ‘tail’ is tried in Belgrade diverge into two split courses? This paper assumes at the outset that reporting in both countries was burdened by the difficulties characteristic of *the process of domesticating war crimes trials*. The phenomenon of domestication is well known from studies dealing with the localization of global news production (Clausen 2004), but is growing in importance in the field of transitional justice (Simpson 2007, pp. 135-138, Petrović 2008, pp. 36-8). It has been thoroughly examined in the case of the crimes committed by the leadership and soldiers of Nazi Germany. The Nazi leadership was tried in Nuremberg, not only in the proceedings for the main war criminals, but also in twelve separate court trials prosecuting the leading persons of the Nazi health-care system, industry, General Staff, and law. It is as if these trials depleted the capacity for legal confrontation with the past, and the public in Germany took their results skeptically, with confusing and contradictory opinions (‘they are about the winner’s justice,’ ‘it is a political trial,’ ‘they are not the only ones to blame’). It took over a decade for the judiciary of the Federal Republic of Germany to begin prosecuting crimes from this period. Only with the 1958 Einsatzgruppen<sup>1</sup> trial in Ulm was this Pandora’s box tipped ajar, and motivated by the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, opened fully in proceedings against the staff of the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1963 (Petrović 2007). New trials have been started, yet to be completed – two of the last are still ongoing in Munich. Only with the passage of time and with great effort have the shattered mosaic of ‘judicial micro-truths’ reassembled into a more or less coherent narrative (Betts 2004). Its central pieces, only now after more than sixty years, are the results of the first Nuremberg trial, whose many details remain a matter of dispute, but whose main intentions and results are no longer questioned. In order to

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<sup>1</sup> SS paramilitary death squad responsible for mass killings during World War II (translator’s note).

understand the dynamics of reporting on Ovčara we must generalize on the theory on the inherent tension between the international and national levels of war prosecution and apply it to the area of the former Yugoslavia (Rangelov 2004), so as to build a better foundation for understanding strategies of media reporting on The Hague trial of the Vukovar Three and the Belgrade trial for the crime in Ovčara.

With this goal in mind, this paper analyzes the development of the reports on both of the aforementioned trials in four daily newspapers, two from Croatia (*Vjesnik* and *Večernji list*) and two from Serbia (*Politika* and *Večernje novosti*). The selected papers are comparable in form (two so-called ‘mainstream’ and two ‘evening’ newspapers)<sup>2</sup> and audience impact (reciprocally similar circulations). With regard to ownership structure, the only paper that stands out is *Vjesnik*, where the state has majority ownership. *Večernje novosti* is largely privately owned, although the state of Serbia owns a certain share (30 percent). *Politika* is owned in half by foreign owners (50 percent by the German publishing company WAZ), and *Večernji list* is in the private ownership of a foreign owner. Naturally, one must bear in mind that this selection imposes certain limitations, but keeping in view the influence and tradition of these newspapers in their environments, our assessment is that the sample is nevertheless a faithful representation of the prevailing trends in the societies of Croatia and Serbia.

We first analyze the reports of these media on The Hague proceedings early on in the trial, during the courts’ rendering of the trial judgment and the appeals judgment, in order to compare the changes in tone of the reports throughout the trial, including the unexpected twist of events provoked by the final verdict, clearly reflected in the

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<sup>2</sup> The assumed opposite of ‘mainstream’ media are alternative media; however, the expression ‘mainstream’ is used here to distinguish *Politika* and *Vjesnik* as conventional media as opposed to daily newspapers sharing some of the characteristics of tabloids, although they are not tabloids by definition.

reports. This is followed by an analysis of the reports on the Belgrade proceedings against perpetrators of the crimes, likewise during the beginning and the rendering of the trial judgment, and during the retrial caused by the reversal of the trial judgment. All 39 reports published from the period between March 2004, when the Belgrade trial began, and May 2009, when the Appeals Chamber of The Hague Tribunal rendered its judgment, have been included in the analysis. The attempt to include in this analysis reports by Bosnian journals failed, thus confirming our initial hypothesis. Analyses of *Dnevni avaz* and *Glas Srpske* concluded that these media hardly covered the trials of the accused for the crime in Ovčara at all, and that during the observed period they devoted space to reports on trials or investigations concerning war crimes committed during the war in Bosnia 1992-1995.

Unlike the Bosnian media, the analyzed newspapers from Serbia and Croatia devoted great attention to the proceedings. All four papers devoted significantly more attention to the trial in The Hague than the one in Belgrade, and particularly focused on key moments of the court proceedings, which makes possible a comparative analysis of reporting strategies. The comparison of both analyses is complemented by interviews with journalists covering the trials in order to complete the context and avoid possible loose ends.

## Analysis of Reports from The Hague Trial

### The Start of the Trial

The trial started on October 11, 2005, before the ICTY in The Hague. The so-called ‘mainstream’ newspapers, *Vjesnik* and *Politika*, immediately reveal the similarity in their attitudes on the accused with that of the two countries’ political officials, both tinged by nationalism.

*Vjesnik* gives a neutral report titled ‘The Trial of ‘the Vukovar Three’ Starts,’ (Bašić 2005), in which it cites the prosecution’s opening remarks, but without any mention of the testimony of the defendants Šljivančanin and Radić (Mrkšić refused to address the court).

Politika likewise publishes a neutral text (a report by the state news agency Tanjug) under the headline ‘The Three before Judges.’ However, while *Vjesnik* cites prosecutor Marks Moore’s mentioning ‘rebel Serbs in Croatia,’ the JNA ‘supporting the rebel Croatian Serbs’s fight against the Croatian authorities,’ and the ‘1st Mechanized Guard Brigade from Belgrade,’ the report in *Politika* carefully avoids mentioning Serbs and the links of Serbian forces with the Vukovar case on the whole. A sidebar by the Beta news agency excerpts Šljivančanin and Radić’s plea of not guilty of the criminal charges and cites Šljivančanin saying, ‘The worst and greatest untruth about me is that I hated the Croatian people.’

The tone changes in the dailies. *Večernje novosti* implies that the three JNA officers are innocent and falsely accused with a somewhat biased tone as early on as in the headline ‘Defendants Ask for the Truth.’ The subheading ‘Prosecutor *claims* to have witnesses confirming the crimes of the accused’ [emphasis added]. *Novosti* cites Radić who ‘asked the court to uncover the real truth,’ and Šljivančanin saying, ‘those who hated the JNA’ and wanted to tarnish its reputation are guilty of the crimes in Vukovar. Their goal was to belittle and discredit us officers who loved our country,’ said Šljivančanin finally. The expression ‘our country’ refers ambiguously to both Yugoslavia (SFRY) and Yugoslavia (SRY, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro after the dissolution of the federation). The impression is that the author of the report carefully avoided the words Serbs and Serbia in an attempt to not link them to the crimes in Vukovar.

Similar to *Novosti*, on the opposing side *Večernji list* announces the trial (Grubišić, Rakšajn, Bradarić 2005, p. 11) with an attitude clearly expressed in the headline ‘Three Awarded with Medals of Slaughter.’ The newspaper gives value judgments right after the lead on who is on trial and why:

When on November 20, 1991 the notorious ‘Vukovar Three’ ordered the slaughter of captured Croats, executed under their supervision so brutally and thoroughly by the Chetniks, JNA troops, and other Serb paramilitary formations, Dino Dalić, the son of the Croatian soldier Tihomir Dalić executed in Ovčara, was only a few months old.

What follows is an emotional portrayal of the witnesses, the victim’s family, and the testimony of Tihomir Dalić’s mother who spoke of how no mother could ever ‘forget and forgive the death of her son’ and expressing doubts that the trial would bring justice to the victims. The paper then quotes a witness who survived the torture and executions in Ovčara, and only briefly cites the testimony of the accused to The Hague Tribunal in a separate article titled ‘Criminals Continue to Deny Guilt.’ The following day, in a neutral tone, the paper gives only a brief report on the start of the trial, citing, in addition to the gist of the accusations, Šljivančanin and Radić’s pleas of not guilty (Hina 2005, p. 5). The insubstantial and neutral report might indicate a lack of interest for the objective, judicial view of the event, and an insistence on the fact that only ‘our’ truth is the right one. It is possible, however, that this is no more than the newspaper’s editorial concept, by virtue of which a brief report of the event itself is sufficient, which is not unusual for this type of newspaper (evening).

### **Trial Judgment – Unexpected Outcome**

National ideologies are more conspicuous in reports on the rendering of the trial judgment on September 27, 2007. On September 28, 2007, for instance, *Večernji list* publishes a report with the simple and seemingly neutral headline ‘Vukovar Three,’ not anticipating the outcome of the trial. After reading the article, however, it becomes clear that the headline truly serves to express indignation over the sentence passed. The introductory part of the report itself begins with the unambiguous comment, ‘The trial of three of the most responsible military commanders of the elite 1st Mechanized Guard



Brigade of the JNA that captured and evacuated the Vukovar hospital drew to a *scandalous* close.’ The comment preceding the news indicates an unfavorable outcome for ‘us’ – in this case the entire Croatian public identifying with the Vukovar case.

Miroslav Radić, the commander of the Special Forces, was found not guilty on all counts of the indictment and was released from detention. He is a free man because, apart from having been seen in front of the hospital, no criminal wrongdoing was proven. Veselin Šljivančanin, in charge of ‘security,’ was given only five years in prison for failing to prevent cruel and inhumane treatment of the captured Croats. ... Who is, therefore, responsible for the 264 murdered Croats in Ovčara? The judges declare this a ‘tragic’ fact and that Serb paramilitaries from the Territorial Defense, mostly from the Vukovar area, and ‘Serb paramilitary units,’ are the guilty parties. Unnamed.

The newspaper then repeats in detail the accusations against the three former officers, in order to remind the public ‘what they did to our own’:

The indictment was much more ambitious. The indictment (in 8 counts) notes that in late October 1991 the JNA surrounded the city of Vukovar. The siege lasted until November 18, 1991, when Serb forces captured the city. During the siege, the JNA bombarded the town into annihilation and hundreds were killed. After the occupation, Serb forces murdered several hundred more non-Serbs. Most of the non-Serb population was driven out during the few days after the fall of Vukovar. Hundreds sought refuge in the Vukovar hospital in the last days of the siege, believing the hospital would be evacuated in the presence of international observers.

The soldiers took around 400 non-Serbs from the hospital on November 20. Radić and Šljivančanin personally participated in the selection of detainees, who were then boarded onto buses. In the JNA’s barracks, Serb forces humiliated detainees and threatened them. They were then transported to the Ovčara agricultural estate where soldiers beat them while they were lined up in a row.

They then transported them to a pit in the direction of Grabovo, a village 3 km southeast of Ovčara, where they murdered at least 264 Croats and other non-Serbs from the Vukovar hospital. The victims’ corpses were bulldozed into a mass grave. The integral indictment, however, fell through.

*Večernji list* here does not shy away from drawing a clear conclusion that Serb forces committed the crime while the victims were Croats and ‘other non-Serbs.’ Giving so much space to repeating the charges and omitting the judge’s detailed explanation

of the judgment indicates that the newspaper holds a clear ‘national’ attitude on the judgment, taken for granted as the attitude of the broader public in Croatia. The verdict is unacceptable for both.

In contrast to *Večernji list*, the headline of the Serbian *Večernje novosti* victoriously stresses the most important part of the judgment: ‘The First Serb to Defeat The Hague.’ (Radosavljević 2007).

The report from The Hague starts with a reaction entirely opposite to the one *Večernji list* started its report with: ‘I cannot believe it! I cannot believe it!’ repeated Miroslav Radić, a captain in the former JNA, over and over again, who was cleared of all charges for the crime in Vukovar by The Hague Tribunal.’

This is followed by an indication of the significance of such a verdict for ‘us’: ‘In the 14 years of its existence, the Tribunal has indicted 161 persons. In the 108 trials completed, Radić is the first, and so far the only, Serb to be found not guilty!’ Radić’s release was therefore represented as a national victory of the highest order.

What come next are the reaction of the defense attorney and a repetition of the indictment, but unlike *Večernji list*, *Novosti* presents the accusations from the opposite angle, not as the prosecution’s ambitiousness, but as a description of the ‘torment’ the ‘hero’ has survived:

They burdened his conscience with the gravest of crimes. He, Miroslav Radić, a JNA Captain ... ‘commanded the Serb forces in part of a joint criminal enterprise and personally selected Croatian prisoners from the Vukovar hospital he knew would be killed,’ the indictment reads. And the truth was, as was shown after the trial, quite different. Particularly so due to the fact that the judges were unanimous in their decision – the prosecution failed to prove both that there was a joint criminal enterprise or that Radić was responsible in the least. All this put together casts a entirely different light on the nature of the ‘homeland war’<sup>3</sup> and what happened in the early nineties in Croatia.

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<sup>3</sup> The Croatian war of independence, referred to as the Homeland War, or *Domovinski rat* (translator’s note).

Interestingly, as if they were not tried for the same acts, Mrkšić, who was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison, goes nearly unmentioned in the report. This might mean that the report chose the ‘judicial truth’ better suited to ‘national interest’ – the one that set Radić free, ‘casting a new light’ on everything that happened in Croatia and Vukovar.

Describing in the same report Veselin Šljivančanin’s sentence of five years in prison, the paper cites his attorney who claims that his client ‘still maintains his innocence,’ and emphasizes ‘that his team claimed from the beginning what the court ruled on ... that no civilians were killed in Ovčara and that there was no joint criminal enterprise’ – which is supposedly meant to clear him of all responsibility for the murders. The report concludes with a reminder that Šljivančanin, having spent four years in prison, is eligible for temporary early release. In addition to no mention of the verdict for Mile Mrkšić, the report devotes no space to retelling the events in Ovčara, what the three men were accused of, or how many people were killed on the occasion.

*Vjesnik* likewise does not refrain from reacting to the judgment emotionally and comments in the very headline: ‘Prime Minister Sanader: this is a defeat of the idea of The Hague court’ (Hina, Ma.L./G.Č. 2007). Instead of the news itself, the subheading puts the reaction to the forefront: ‘We are already preparing a brief for the Security Council in which we will say, as a member state of the UN, the body that founded The Hague court, that this verdict is inhuman and unjust, and file a harsh protest,’ announced the prime minister Thursday evening in Ovčara.’ By putting the reaction of the prime minister, one of the state’s highest representatives, to the forefront, the paper sends out a message to its readership that the state will not allow the ‘scandalous verdict’ to ‘pass uncontested,’ and the attitude of the state leadership that the verdict is ‘inhuman and unjust,’ which suggests to the readers that ‘all of us’ are endangered by such an outcome of the trial.

The Serbian counterpart to *Vjesnik*, the government-friendly *Politika*, reflects in its very headline the official political stance of Serbia. A neutral headline without

gloating (this is left to *Novosti*), but one whose word order speaks to what is ‘for us’ most significant about the judgment: ‘Radić freed, Mrkšić 20, Šljivančanin Five Years’ (Beta 2007). With no other headline elements, the report cited from the Beta news agency covers in a ‘politically correct’ manner Sanader and Mesić’s reactions, but not those of the Serbian authorities, attorneys, or any others.

### **Appeals Judgment – Shocking Twist of Events**

The media reports after the appeals judgment on May 5, 2009, confirming Mrkšić’s sentence and increasing Šljivančanin’s from five to 17 years in prison, offered an inverse of the image from before.

This time around, Vjesnik has a neutral headline, which sounds nearly as if the news were expected: ‘Šljivančanin’s Sentence Increased to 17 years, and Mrkšić’s 20-year Sentence Upheld’ (Hina 2009).

The paper cites the brief report by the Hina news agency giving rough information on the decision of the Appeals Chamber, without gloating or emotionally/nationally charged overtones.

*Politika*, which reported on the trial judgment in a neutral tone and without gloating over Radić’s release or Šljivančanin’s light sentence, this time around hints at more of an attitude in its headline: ‘Šljivančanin’s Sentence Tripled’ (Čarnić 2009). A few semantic details indicate a certain attitude to the actors of the news in a neutrally written article. The article first stresses that the Appeals Chamber ‘found [Šljivančanin] guilty ... modifying the finding of the trial judgment *against the opposition of two of the judges*’ [emphasis added].

*Politika*’s report cites the reaction of Šljivančanin’s wife in strong imagery, which did not appear in the report on the trial judgment:

After the rendering of the final judgment, Šljivančanin's wife, Persa, loudly protested in the observer's gallery, pouncing on the glass wall of the courtroom. Surrounded by security guards and her husband's attorneys in the foyer of the tribunal, she cried and cursed, 'an innocent man has been sentenced.'

In the end, the report relates the trial of the Vukovar Three to the trial in Belgrade of members of the Territorial Defense of Vukovar for the first time not only in *Politika*, but also in the other media observed. A reporter from *Politika* reminds of the sentences meted out in Belgrade in the Ovčara proceedings less than two months prior to the decision of the Appeals Chamber in The Hague.

Interestingly, the basic report is frequently written in a neutral tone, according to professional criteria, while accompanying texts that reflect the true attitude of the editorial staff.

For instance, *Politika* published an article on the reaction of one of Šljivančanin's attorneys titled 'Draconian Sentence' (Čarnić 2009). In addition to a seemingly inconspicuous report on the rendering of the appeals judgment. The article is more concerned with nationality and cites the impression of attorney Goran Petronijević that the judgment is 'unreasonable and the result of the influence of the Croatian lobby on The Hague Tribunal.' Once more it is stressed, 'the members of the Chamber ruled on the judgment three-to-two, i.e. two members of the Chamber were against such a decision,' which implies that such a sentence was decided upon by a majority vote, and therefore some judges themselves felt it should not have been rendered.

*Politika* cites a press release of the National Council for Cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, which is 'surprised by the judgment of the Appeals Chamber.'

The paper's selection of reactions and quotes also reflects its attitude towards the event.

*Večernji list* (Ivanković 2009) runs with a headline nearly identical to that of *Vjesnik*, but the article is more biased and even contains elements of gloating over the decision of the Appeals Chamber:

A year and a half after the incomprehensibly mild sentence given to the ‘Vukovar Three,’ the former Major of the Counter-Intelligence Service of the JNA, Veselin Šljivančanin, will not return to a life of freedom in Belgrade for at least a dozen years more. The Appeals Chamber of The Hague court, in its *final* judgment reversed the judgment de facto releasing Šljivančanin (five years in prison, nearly the time he spent in The Hague), and concluded that the former KOS<sup>4</sup> Major was guilty of the massacre of 194 Croatian prisoners of war. He was sentenced to 17 years in prison.

The paper stresses part of the disposition of the judgment contributing to the Croatian public’s view of the trial judgment: ‘[T]he Trial Chamber’s decision was so unreasonable or plainly unjust that the Appeals Chamber is able to infer that the Trial Chamber must have failed to exercise its discretion properly’ reads the opinion of the Presiding Judge Theodor Meron.’ *Večernji list* also reports on the majority vote in rendering the judgment, but unlike the Serbian media reports that the Appeals Chamber reached the decision on raising Šljivančanin’s sentence ‘in a tight 3-2 majority vote, because judges Pocar and Vaz *dissented*’ (in *Politika* they were *opposed*). The English-language judgment uses the expression ‘dissenting.’

*Večernje novosti* devoted most space to the appeals judgment. The paper first reports quite neutrally in an article titled ‘17 for Šljivančanin and 20 Years for Mrškić’ (Radosavljević 2009), citing parts of the Appeals Chamber’s elaboration (and even using the same quote by Judge Meron where he deems that the trial judgment was ‘unreasonable’) discussing the justification for raising Šljivančanin’s sentence. *Novosti* also publishes the reactions of the National Council for Cooperation with the ICTY, the acquitted Miroslav Radić (co-combatant), and Olga Kavran, the spokesperson of The Hague Tribunal’s Prosecution. Such a combination ought to indicate appropriate and professional reporting on the event.

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<sup>4</sup> *Kontraobavještajna služba*, KOS (translator’s note).

With these, however, the paper publishes an article/comment under the headline ‘Three Votes for Torture,’ (Radosavljević 2009), wording its attitude in the very title: first by emphasizing the fact that three (of the five) votes were for raising the sentence, therefore not all, which implies that not all of the judges thought Šljivančanin should have been given such a severe sentence, and then by ‘torture’ – indicating what the 17-year-long sentence for the former JNA officer truly means. The tone of the article clearly shows ‘whose side’ the author is on.

The article is followed by the reaction of the Serbian president Boris Tadić, who is disappointed with the verdict, but ‘says that cooperation with the Tribunal must not be brought into question, for this would also question Serbia’s development, halt Euro-integration, and prevent visa liberalization,’ indicating the attitude of the highest-ranking state authority as to why there is cooperation with the Tribunal in the first place. In addition, the paper publishes the call of the ultranationalist Serb Radical Party saying that continuing cooperation would mean ‘the continued national humiliation of Serbia.’ Reactions from Croatia or The Hague are not included.

Several days later, *Večernje novosti* revisits the case in an article from May 13, 2009, where the author, E. Radosavljević, elaborates in detail the reasons causing the two judges to dissent.

The appeals judgment on the retired colonel of the former JNA, Veselin Šljivančanin, surprised the general public in the very first hearing. A tripling of the sentence based on the same evidence is difficult to understand for experts, let alone laypersons. When one scratches below the surface, however, and reads the dissenting opinions of Judges Andresia Vaz and Fausto Pocar, there is more room for doubt yet. In his partially dissenting opinion, Judge Vaz from Senegal *claims* that the Appeals Chamber could not determine beyond all doubt that Šljivančanin aided and abetted the murders of Croatian prisoners in Ovčara.

The selected quotes from Judge Vaz’s opinion mainly appear to vindicate Šljivančanin and indicate that there is ‘no evidence’ for the charges brought against him, which brings the whole of the judgment into question. A similar subheading, ‘There was no

evidence,' briefly cites Judge Pokar's opinion, who 'claims in his dissenting opinion that he disagrees with the majority of the judges that the Appeals Chambers is competent to review the decision of the Trial Chamber.' Therefore, the decision of the Appeals Chamber is for *Večernje novosti* disputable on procedural and substantial grounds, which implies that Šljivančanin's guilt has not been proven.

## Analysis of Reports from the Belgrade Trial

Unlike reports from the trial in The Hague, the media devoted significantly less attention to the trial of the group of 18 members of paramilitary formations and Vukovar's territorial defense for the crime in Ovčara.

### **The Start of the Trial**

The trial started on March 9, 2004, before the Special War Crimes Division of the District Court in Belgrade. It was the first war crimes trial brought before the court on the basis of an indictment issued by the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor of Serbia, established less than a year earlier.

The analysis of articles on the trial by the observed media indicates that the attitude to the accused is not nearly as emotional as to the three JNA officers. Places where there were emotional reactions pertained more to the crime itself and the victims than the perpetrators. The reason for this might be that the accused were suspected of committing a crime neither side disputed. In addition, they carried no political weight and were represented (particularly on the Serbian side) as units out of the control of the official army and authorities in Belgrade, which reduces command responsibility, and by extension, general responsibility.



Reporting on the start of the trial, *Politika* exhibits no bias toward the accused, and its report indicates in no part the possibility that they are ‘ours.’ The report is very neutral, (Lazić 2004, pp. 1-10.) although more space is given to the testimony of the defendant than the remarks of the prosecutor, which might indirectly point to a certain attitude on the trial. The report, appearing on the front page (though is it more likely that the event is given publicity because it is the first war crimes trial before a domestic court, rather than because it concerns Ovčara), bears no national overtones nor stresses in any way the national affiliation of the accused (they are mentioned by name and last name, and as members of the Vukovar Territorial Defense, at any rate a context Serbia has nothing to do with).

*Večernje novosti* reports on the start of the trial only on page 17, in the Hronika<sup>5</sup> section, in an article with a headline dominating the page, ‘I Shot Nobody!’ (Bjelić 2004, p. 17), which is the testimony of the first accused Vujović from the start of the trial. *Novosti* likewise devotes greater attention to the fact that this is the first war crimes trial before a domestic court (progressing ‘without incidents’):

The trial shall be conducted under the watchful eye of a large number of representatives of non-governmental organizations and the OSCE, United Nations, The Hague Tribunal, and other observers. With these proceedings, our judiciary needs to show its readiness to try those accused of war crimes, but also to take over the trials *of our citizens in The Hague*, say representatives of the Special Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor [emphasis added].

Unlike *Politika*, which does not mention the nationality of the accused anywhere, this newspaper’s reports emphasizes that the trial is against six Serbs.

What the reports by *Politika* and *Večernje novosti* casually mention as a component part of the first accused’s testimony (*Politika* in a generalized headline: ‘The Accused Accuses the General’, Lazić 2004), *Vjesnik* puts at the forefront in its headline: ‘Vujović

<sup>5</sup> *Chronicle*, consisting of a brief overview of current news (translator’s note).

accuses Šljivančanin, Mrkšić, Radić and Vasiljević of the crimes,' (Sajler 2004), which shows the attitude that the trial of the Vukovar Three is more significant, while in Belgrade the trial is against the mere executors of the crime. *Vjesnik* publishes a quote by Vujović unused both by *Novosti* or *Politika* in their reports: 'We were falsely accused in order to avoid the responsibility of the Chief of the SDB,<sup>6</sup> Aco Vasiljević, and Mile Mrkšić, Miroslav Radić and Veselin Šljivančanin,' which again indicates the significance of high-ranking JNA officers, identified in Croatia with Serbian leadership and politics. The selection of the facts and quotes made by any reporter, in this case, as well as in many other media close to the authorities in the area of the former Yugoslavia, is a means of reflecting the official attitude of the state and supporting national ideology. The issue of selection in news production is hardly novel and relatively well-researched. There are several approaches to the topic. One of them is the agenda-setting approach, which suggests that information-providing media do not tell people what to think, but what to think about (Shaw and McCombs, 1977). Media elites act as 'guardians of the gate' and influence public policies by establishing an information agenda ensuring information selectivity, limiting the view of the public of social and political realities, and giving an advantage and attracting attention to some issues and diverting it from others (Windhauser 1977, Grady 1982, pp. 1-60).

According to Gamson, media organizations construct social reality by selecting and giving advantage to some information and ignoring or omitting other connected stories. The interpretative structure that manages the selection, omission, advantage giving, and the editorial process, is called the 'news frame' (Gamson 1991).

Due to this, information in newspapers suffers from 'selection bias,' because the media does not report on all the events taking place. Many factors influence selection

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<sup>6</sup> *Služba državne bezbednosti*, Serbian, State Security Agency (translator's note).

bias. Some authors categorize them in three groups: a) characteristics of the event; (b) characteristics of the media; (c) characteristics of the problem. According to some research, the bias is fairly consistent within some media's reporting (Earl *et al.* 2004). In our case, we might consider thinking of the differences in the selection bias between semi-state mainstream papers, acting as a kind of official bulletin of the government, and daily, largely private, newspapers.

### **The Rendering of the Trial Judgment**

The trial judgment for the accused of the crime in Ovčara was rendered on December 12, 2005. The six accused were sentenced to the maximum twenty years in prison, two were acquitted due to lack of evidence, and others were given lower sentences. Politika reports on the judgment on its front page (Čarnić 2005, pp. 1-11.), citing the accused name after name and the number of years they were sentenced to serve, but lists no additional details indicating who they are, what they did during the war, and how they found themselves in a position to commit the crime. The reporter cites the opinion of Judge Vesko Krstajić describing in detail the origins of the conflict in Croatia (which involved the court's assessment that the conflict in question had no international character, which further implies that there could have been no violations of international law). Once again, any mention of the nationalities of the accused is carefully avoided, as well as the role of Belgrade in controlling JNA forces. The reaction of the family of one of the people killed in Ovčara at the end of the article serves to show that the relatives of the victims are satisfied with the verdict, which ought to give an impression of neutrality and non-bias to the readers.

*Večernje novosti* reports on the event of the trial again only on page 13, thus diminishing its significance. The article titled 'Maximal Sentences Greeted with Curses' (N.B. 2005. p. 13.) emphasizes the reactions of the families of the accused instead of the victims, and the reporter makes the editorial staff's attitude on the trial and the

judgment clear. The image in the text with the caption ‘DISAPPOINTED – Relatives of the accused upon leaving the courtroom.’ Another image depicts relatives of the ‘murdered Croatian soldiers’ with the caption ‘DISGRUNTLED,’ although the sidebar cites that most of the relatives of the victims who followed the sentencing ‘stated that the sentence cannot make up for their loss, but they are in principle satisfied with the entire proceedings.’ A subheading of the report in Novosti puts at the forefront the fact that ‘Marko Ljuboja and Slobodan Katić were acquitted due to lack of evidence,’ and that the other two accused were taken out of the courtroom during the reading of the judgment, which indicates the revolt caused by the sentence (the report gives most of its space to the reactions of the accused to the judgment, and far less space to an elaboration of the judgment).

Vjesnik’s report from Belgrade is significantly more neutral, although it also shows in its headline ‘whose side’ the reporter is on: ‘Criminals from Ovčara Get 5 to 20,’ (Sajler 2005), without the distance and reserve to the judgment shown by Serbian media. In the subheading, the report cites that the accused were members and commanders of the Vukovar Territorial Defense and the paramilitary formation ‘Leva Supoderica,’ which the Serbian media either do not mention or mention passingly. *Vjesnik* additionally reminds of the crime itself in the very introduction: ‘Fourteen years after the horrific crime in Vukovar Ovčara was committed, with over 200 murdered Croats and other non-Serbs, the Special War Crimes Court in Belgrade rendered the first trial judgment on Monday finding *part of those responsible for the crime* guilty and sentencing them to a total amount of 231 years in prison’ [emphasis added]. The report only briefly cites Judge Krstajić statement that ‘It has been proven beyond dispute that the crime in Ovčara took place and that the accused participated in it.’ The reactions of the accused are given little space (there is only a brief mention of their reactions), but the report notes what the Serbian media’s reports do not: ‘Upon exiting the courtroom, members of the families of the accused provoked with three fingers in the air and shouted at employees of the court, ‘Serb traitors!’’ The report

also cites the reaction of the first accused, Vujović, ‘who, while the judge read out the names of the 200 exhumed bodies from the mass grave in Ovčara – laughed!’

Večernji list notes in a headline, ‘The Chamber of the District Court for War Crimes in Belgrade found 14 members of the paramilitary formation Leva Supoderica from Šid guilty, and acquitted two due to lack of evidence.’ Indicating the geographic origin of the accused, the paper tells its readers that the accused are Serbs, and expressed its attitude on the sentence and how well it is suited to the crime in the headline, ‘Only a Year per Killed in Ovčara’ (Bradarić, Grubišić 2005). While the Serbian media call it a trial for murders of ‘Croatian soldiers’ (*Večernje novosti*) or ‘prisoners of war’ (*Politika*), the report of *Večernji list* mentions several times that the killed were ‘Croatian civilians, the wounded from the Vukovar hospital.’ Ovčara is the ‘largest Croatian war site,’ and the accused are ‘members of the paramilitary formation Leva Supoderica, founded by Šešelj’s Serb Radical Party in 1991 in Šid,’ and therefore Serbs linked to legitimate political parties in Serbia. The report is followed by a clear list of the accused and their sentences, and reactions of citizens of Vukovar to the verdict and a brief reminder that those ‘most responsible’ of the crime are being tried in The Hague: Mrkšić, Šljivančanin, and Radić.

### **The Start of the Review Trial – Returning to the Starting Point**

The decision of the Supreme Court of Serbia to reverse the trial judgments and order a retrial is covered only sporadically and sparsely by the newspapers observed. Greater attention to the case is devoted by the four newspapers only at the start of the retrial on March 12, 2007.

*Vjesnik* published the news on its second page among events of the day, reporting with a positive overtone on the trial chamber and the prosecution, stressing that it has not altered the indictment from the first proceedings. Again, *Vjesnik*’s reporter clearly states that the accused are thought to be connected with the Serb Radical

Party (al Pinto-Brkić 2007, p. 2), and that they were members of a paramilitary formation and Vukovar Territorial Defense, to which reports from the first trial did not pay any significance.

Politika marks the start of the retrial in a brief report, reporting neutrally that the accused deny their guilt, without stating details or reminding readers of the crime, the previous trial, or the reasons for the reversal of the initial judgment. *Večernje novosti* likewise publishes a brief article under the title ‘The Accused Deny Again,’ (E. R. 2007) followed the next day by ‘They Did Not Execute’ (E. R. 2007.). The report only briefly cites that the accused pleaded not guilty, and the defense claims of the first accused, whowhich remains the same as in the first trial, but without any reference to the crime itself. The paper does not even cite the number of killed or who they were, but only writes the group is accused of ‘crimes in the Ovčara agricultural estate near Vukovar.’ There is also neither explanation as to why the trial is repeated nor the content of the original judgment.

*Večernji list*, however, gives an announcement of the trial a day earlier (Bradarić 2007), reminding of all the details of the crime and the initial trial, citing statements by the prosecutor’s spokesperson, Bruno Vekarić, that the retrial should be shorter, and family members saying that they will not attend the new trial. A significant portion of the article, however, is devoted to the fact that there is no one from the JNA leadership in the dock, which is cited as the ‘co-creator of everything together with Milošević,’ and cites the words of the president of the Center for War Crimes Research in Vukovar that the trial is only ‘for Serbs born in Croatia’ – which implies that Serbia itself is avoiding responsibility for the crime. The very report from the start of the new trial is largely affirmative of the court and the prosecution (including the report by *Vjesnik*). (Damjanić 2007).

### **(Un)expected Judgment**

Finally, the rendering of the judgment in the retrial (March 12, 2009) stirred a revolt from the Croatian side, dutifully covered by *Večernji list* in an article with the headline whose first part reads, ‘The mothers of those killed embittered by the significantly lower sentences for a horrible war crime.’ (Bradarić 2009). The first part gives an entirely different tone to the second part of the headline, ‘Belgrade Court Reduces Sentences for Crime in Ovčara’ than is the case in, for instance, *Politika*, whose headline ‘Milder Sentences for Crime in Ovčara,’ (Čarnić 2009) placed in a more neutral context, indicates tacit approval of the court’s decision. Similar to the manner in which certain Serbian newspapers wrote in the first part of their reports on the sentencing of the Vukovar Three in The Hague, *Večernji list* starts out with an emotional reaction from the members of the victims’ families, indicating the very tone of the report, and instead of commentary really reflects the attitude of the editorial staff on the event:

‘This is a disgrace. I cannot believe that they reached such a disgraceful verdict. No prison sentence can bring back my son, but I cannot believe that they are releasing some of those hangmen,’ said Jozefina Varga, the mother of Vladimir, who was murdered in Ovčara, following today’s sentencing of those accused of war crimes in Ovčara in 1991.

Citing the words of Ivan Pšenica, president of the Alliance of Captured and Missing Defenders Associations, *Večernji list* once again indicates the fact that the trial was for ‘the perpetrators’ and not for those who ‘issued the orders’: ‘Those who issued the orders, members of the military and political leadership of Serbia, members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Serb Orthodox Church, are still nowhere to be found.’

*Večernje novosti* were far more moderate this time around and report on the sentencing (E.R. 2009), the dissatisfaction of the victims’ families, and the partial satisfaction of the prosecution in an utterly neutral tone. Under the headline ‘Satisfied’ the paper cites a statement by Vekarić that the Prosecutor’s Office is satisfied with maximum sentences for seven of the accused, but that they will file

an appeal against the acquittals and the sentences drastically reduced in comparison with the first proceedings. The headline, however, ought to imply for the reader merely that the prosecution is satisfied with the sentences, and that, therefore, justice has been met, with the announcement of the appeals in the backseat.

As opposed to *Novosti, Politika* (Čarnić 2009), in its headline singles out the fact that the sentences have been reduced ('Milder Sentences for Crime in Ovčara,' but gives a lengthy report on the judgment rendered, reminding of the crime itself and how it played out. The article is likewise neutral, but significantly more detailed, and in addition to it the report of the newspaper cites the dissatisfaction of the victims' families over the verdict and the fact that 'the prosecution has announced the filing of appeals.' (Čarnić 2009).

Visibly avoiding any sort of national overtones in the articles (unlike those on the trial of the Vukovar Three in The Hague) may be caused by two reasons: first, the trial was undoubtedly against the direct perpetrators of a crime that cannot be justified in any way even in the domestic public, and second, they are not seen as 'ours' or as representatives of the military and civilians authorities from the time.

*Vjesnik* cites the brief agency reports by Hina on the judgments rendered (Hina 2009, p. 4.), without giving it greater significance, which likewise reflects the attitude of the official Croatian authorities on the entire case.

Thus, it may be concluded that reports are more nuanced when the media is satisfied with the judgment. Newspapers close to the authorities in both groups observed report with restraint on 'positive' results for their side. Generally speaking, it seems that such 'restraint' is greater in so-called 'mainstream' papers as opposed to the dailies, and that it might serve as a criterion for the genre division of the newspapers themselves.

From what has been said it is clear that there are contexts and a general atmosphere that the journalistic community takes for granted, and that they may not be uncovered solely on the basis of discourse analysis and theory. With this in mind,



we interviewed several journalists, who were simultaneously witnesses to and creators of media narratives.

### **Reporters Experiences – Interviews**

In order for the analysis to be complete, we felt it necessary to include and analyze the opinions and experiences of the journalists covering the proceedings. Dorotea Čarnić, a reporter for Belgrade's *Politika*, covered, among others, some of the trials of the accused for Ovčara, as well as did Tatjana Tagirov, first as a correspondent of the Croatian news agency Hina, and then as a reporter of the Serbian weekly *Vreme*. Ljubica Gojgić reported for the private Serb radio-television station B92 on the most important trials before the ICTY in The Hague. In interviews conducted in Belgrade during September and October 2009, the three journalists answered questions concerning the influence of national ideologies on war crimes trials reporting, the relation between the accused and victims and their nationalities, as well as their impressions on the reports of national media. The journalists are considered some of the most experienced war crimes trials reporters. Their attitudes do not necessarily reflect the attitudes of the media for which they work.

### **The Influence of National Affiliation**

Asked whether the nationality of the media, perpetrators, and victims, had any influence on her reports on war crimes trials, **Dorotea Čarnić** replied:

No one ever asked from me, nor would have I agreed to, or have I myself made any distinction in my relationship to the victims or perpetrators of the crimes in my reports in relation to their nationality. As a journalist and a human being I can only be on the side of the victim, regardless of which nation he or she is. Regardless of who is on trial, I always stick to the presumption of innocence until guilt is determined by a final judgment.

Čarnić said ‘national identity cannot matter for the tone of the report, and it most commonly isn’t in the media I follow. I have not followed with sufficient care the reports by all the media, but certain media, especially tabloids, have no interest in covering war crimes trials in general.’

Despite the claim that she makes no distinction between the nationalities of the victims or the perpetrators of the crime in her work, when asked whether national affiliation is more or less obvious in reports on war crimes trials in comparison to other media reports, Čarnić replied, ‘The national affiliation of the perpetrators or the victims is obvious, and must be, since these are crimes on the grounds of nationality.’

**Tatjana Tagirov** also said that she personally ‘makes no difference who of the accused are in question, regardless of whether I write for Croatian or Serbian media.’

Tagirov, on the other hand, feels that the owners and editors of the dominant media ‘definitely influence’ the extent of the presence of nationalist ideology in reports, while ‘journalists mainly comply to demands, but also the public opinion still held hostage by the attitude that only Serbs/Croats are the victims, and that only the others committed crimes.’

Responding to the question of whether the perpetrator’s national identity is relevant for the tone of a report and whether she feels it is sometimes dominant, Tagirov says, ‘In principle yes, different perceptions of trials against ‘our’ and ‘their’ war criminals still runs strong, which is visible in reports from The Hague trials.’ Her words practically confirm the findings of this research, particularly at the time when judgments were rendered on the three officers in The Hague, particularly Šljivančanin.

As is shown in the reports analyzed for the needs of this paper, Tagirov observes that the media reproduce the political climate in their countries, while they in principle show little interest for the essence of the trials against war crimes suspects – justice for the victims.

Asked of her impression of the manner in which Serbian and Croatian media reported on trials of the accused for Ovčara before the Special Court in Belgrade, Tagirov responded:

Nearly all the media in Croatia and Serbia covered the trial more at its beginning and end, when the judgment was rendered, while in the meantime the trial was only covered mainly by agencies. The retrial, after the initial judgment was reversed, was covered by nearly no one, which speaks enough to the extent the media is interested in principle, even in Croatia where the trial was mostly used for daily political purposes, with the least concern for the victims. There was a visible difference in mentioning the Vukovar Three: the Croatian media continually reminded of the role of the three officers in the crime in Ovčara, while the Serbian media mostly defended their role.

This attitude corroborates the results of the comparative analysis of the reports from The Hague and Belgrade discussed in earlier sections.

Concerning the presence of national affiliation in the media, Tagirov believes it is more obvious in war crimes trials in comparison with other media reports, and says this is most visible in the example of reports from The Hague Tribunal.

Everyone reported exclusively about or on the accused that were their own, while the others were treated as news pieces, chiefly at times judgments were rendered. These reports, instead of facts, mainly look for holes in the indictment and rebuff witnesses. This is seen in reports from the trial of [Vojslav] Šešelj in Serbian media and reports from the trial of [Ante] Gotovina and others in the Croatian media, but also in reports from domestic trials: e.g., when the Supreme Court of Serbia reduced the sentence for one of the accused of the crime in Ovčara from eight to two years, this was a normal fact for Serbian media. When The Hague Tribunal sentences Naser Orić for war crimes to two years in prison, the Serbian media report on it as a first-rate scandal.

**Ljubica Gojgić** also agreed: ‘in principle, the national affiliation of the perpetrators/victims should not bear any influence on how a war crimes trial is reported on.’

Gojgić, however, went a step further and assessed that ‘the issue of the media’s relationship to war crimes is the issue of the society’s relationship to war crimes.’

My experience from The Hague Tribunal says that, almost without exception, in their treatment and relationship to war crimes, the media takes the position of the majority in their society. Not only state media, which might at any rate be expected to do so, but the overwhelming majority of media. Today, when it is possible to follow the work of Croatian and Bosnian media via cable television and the Internet, one may follow the differences in their approach in relation to the media in Serbia.

Gojgić, however, assessed that ‘the percentage of citizens in Serbia who are willing to say that some crimes were committed ‘in their name’ after all has significantly increased. There are fewer and fewer people who would absolutely deny such a fact.’

Such attitudes, in my opinion, reflect journalists’ reporting on war crimes. Serbia thankfully created a climate judgmental of crime. This is by no means to say that one cannot find articles in the Serbian press and electronic media cheering for ‘our own’ even when they are accused of the gravest criminal acts, but such reporting is not characteristic and not dominant.

This research, however, shows that such reports do occur more or less also in dominant media, such as *Politika* and *Večernje novosti*.

‘My impression is that, in this respect, journalists from Croatia and Bosnia are far behind in their degree of willingness to deal with the crime,’ continued, Gojgić explaining:

This is understandable because both of these countries perceive the wars of the nineties as defensive wars or an aggression, and their participants unequivocally as heroes. The possibility that those sides committed crimes as well is not excluded, but is relativized and abated. Such attitudes from the society and the authorities are transferred to media reports as well.

Gojgić cited other examples of ‘journalists’ national affiliation’ that she has observed:

I participated in public forums where, among other things, one heard that the Bosnian media would never write poorly of Naser Orić because he ‘defended the people.’ Croatian journalists were sentenced for being in contempt of The Hague Tribunal by revealing details from closed sessions to the Croatian general Tihomir Blaškić charged with crimes against Muslims. The Albanian journalist Baton Haxhiu revealed the names of protected witnesses from the trial of leaders of the OVK (Kosovo Liberation Army) accused of crimes against Kosovo Serbs. Hague

statistics show that Serbian journalists answered the prosecution's subpoenas to testify against former officials of Serbia more quickly than their Croatian and Bosnian counterparts did in proceedings against leaders from their countries.

It would seem that these interviews confirm the initial thesis of this paper that national ideology has a significant role in reporting on war crimes trials. Although they do not observe or stress personal bias, the reports obviously observe the influence of journalists' national affiliation on their reports, despite knowledge of the principles and rules of the profession according to which this is prohibited. This may lead further to the conclusion that, while it may not be the official editorial policy of media to follow national lines, in two decades of national stratification, a generation of journalists and editors was raised among whom most consider this natural after the conflicts of the 1990s.

Like the ideological self-censorship of socialism, post-conflict societies in the region exhibit national self-censorship, influencing the work of journalists even without direct pressure. In the hierarchy of topics, those concerning the international scene and the so-called 'defense of national interests' seem to be considered more important. This is obviously one of the criteria determining priorities in reports on war crimes trials.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the reports of two Croatian and two Serbian daily newspapers comparable in form, influence, and circulation has shown the presence of certain regularities, both in giving significance and space to trials and the modality of reporting strategies. First we observe a greater significance given to the trial before the tribunal in The Hague as more important from the viewpoint of 'national significance.' In

addition, so-called mainstream newspapers, the Croatian *Vjesnik* and Serbian *Politika*, report on the trial of the three officers in The Hague and members of paramilitary formations in Belgrade with a moderate overtone, while clearly expressing the attitudes of ‘their own’ ruling elites. The two dailies, Zagreb’s *Večernji list* and Belgrade’s *Večernje novosti*, report for their audiences on the key elements of The Hague proceedings with more national charge and fervor. Finally, but not any less significantly, in the articles analyzed, the newspapers do not refrain from information selection in accordance with the dominant national ideologies of Croatian or Serbian society, at the cost of neglecting key professional standards and journalistic norms.

As is apparent from the examples analyzed, the dominant media discourse in the case of the Vukovar Three reflected the broader social and political context in which the trial took place, both in Croatia and Serbia. The official Croatian policy of Vukovar as a symbol of the defense of the homeland and the greatest war site caused by the Serb aggression, the crime of crimes whose perpetrators deserve only the most severe punishment, was reflected in the reports on the trial of the three former Yugoslav officers, where they were depicted as the most distinguished representatives of the Serb aggressors, while their affiliation with the then-Yugoslav army was neglected. In such a context it is not unusual that politicians, including the then-Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, saw the acquittal of Miroslav Radić as a supreme injustice directed against the interests of the Croatian people and state, while the relatively mild sentence for Veselin Šljivančanin in the initial proceedings was seen as an insult to the victims of the Vukovar tragedy. In Serbia, on the other hand, the trial and judgments (particularly the appeals judgments), were seen as anti-Serb and proved that The Hague Tribunal was a political court, established to unjustly try Serbs. The analyzed reports, however, are not explicit about this, but such a conclusion has been drawn on various occasions and corroborated precisely by the example of the trial for war crimes in Ovčara.

If the theory of the inherent tension between the international and national levels in war crimes prosecutions is generalized and applied to the area of the former Yugoslavia (Rangelov 2004), we build a better foundation for understanding media reporting strategies on The Hague trial of the Vukovar Three and the Belgrade trial for the crime in Ovčara. One is reminded of the slow and contradictory reception of the Nuremberg process in German post-war judiciary and society. Although the circumstances are far different – the trials took place at the same time, the cases were much more inter-connected, there was no direct division between victors and defeated, the courts and prosecutions improved in many respects in developing public relations strategies (Klarin 2009, Vekarić *et alia* 2007) – the ambivalent relationship to ‘dealing out justice from abroad’ remains an unmistakable addition, which should necessarily be considered in or within an analysis of reporting discourses. The public opinion in societies with a dominantly ethnically centered political scene does not expect fairness in the trials of ‘our’ perpetrators before ‘their courts,’ and vice-versa. This causes the focus to be moved from trials at the national level, which are considered less relevant, to the course and outcomes of trials before an international court, which, with the expectation of an absolute lack of bias, is attributed with supernatural traits. Thus it is difficult to imagine a verdict that would be met with a unified reaction in Serbia and Croatia, and particularly in both countries simultaneously. The domestication of war crimes trials thus remains a complex and long-lasting process of positioning procedural outcomes on the international and national levels, and the case study of reports on the prosecutions of the crimes committed in Vukovar in Serbia and Croatia represents a ‘road map’ not to be taken. Rather, it indicates the need for developing scientific, legal, and journalistic sensitivity to put an end to the generational reproduction of stereotypes about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.

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**THE CASE OF SCORPIONS:  
MEDIA, NATIONALISM AND WAR CRIMES**

*Helena ZDRAVKOVIC-ZONTA*

In the past several years, there has been persistent criticism of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in Serbia, with claims that the trials of former Serb political and military leaders in the Hague have a negative impact on national politics, while reinforcing images of Serb victimage, strengthening nationalist and ultra-nationalist ideologies and thus hindering regional reconciliation. This kind of reasoning has strengthened arguments that national courts and ‘at home’ war crimes trials are more effective in showing the willingness of a state to assume responsibility for its past, to counter ideologies centered on ethnic hatred and violence, and thus contribute to reconciliation and the prevention of future conflicts and atrocities (Wedgwood 2000). In cases around the world, the success of such ‘domestic’ trials has been connected to media attention and the quality of media reporting (Verdoolaege 2005).

With this in mind, I focus on one of the most prominent war crimes trials in Serbia – the *Scorpions* trial. Through rhetorical analysis I attempt to unveil the role of the print media in Serbia in producing and reproducing national ideologies, and the significance of the coverage in terms of public memory, accountability and reconciliation. The *Scorpions* case refers to the trial of five members of the unit called ‘the Scorpions,’ charged with executing six Bosnian Muslims in July of 1995; the trial took place before the War Crimes Chamber (WCC) in Belgrade, between December 2005 and April 2007. Four of the five ‘Scorpions’ were sentenced to a total of 58 years in prison, while one was acquitted. This provided a powerful example that it could be possible to prosecute the perpetrators of crimes committed during the wars of the 1990s before local courts.

However, the trial, and the verdict, also opened a set of contentious questions concerning war crimes and regional reconciliation. As critics pointed out, the larger issues, such as the role of the Serbian state in creating and maintaining the *Scorpions* unit, the Srebrenica massacre, and more generally its role in the Bosnian conflict, were avoided and covered up. While these issues informed public debates on television, the print media, for the most part, refrained from much discussion. Their coverage was limited largely to transcripts of the trial proceedings and verbatim accounts of the statements of the accused. The analysis will show that these accounts reproduce dominant nationalistic ideologies of Serbian victimage and patriotism, while reflecting the uneasiness and ambiguity that exists in Serbian society concerning domestic war crimes trials, the victims and the accused/perpetrators. I argue thus that the coverage of the trial has negative implications for public memory in Serbia and facing the past, and that it did not help further regional reconciliation.

In order to provide a context for the *Scorpions* trial and its media coverage, I will first introduce the topic of war crimes through looking at perceptions of war crimes trials at the ICTY, and the cooperation of the Serbian state with it, which I will compare with perceptions of ‘at home’ trials and related problems. In section two, I look at the relationship between war crimes trials and reconciliation, focusing on the role of the media. Section three provides a rhetorical analysis of roughly 200 articles from various Serbian print media outlets concerning the *Scorpions* trial, in terms of dominant themes and voice. In the conclusion, I draw out the negative implications of the trial’s coverage for public memory in Serbia, as well as for regional reconciliation efforts.

## **Section I - Facing the past and dealing with war crimes in Serbia**

The issues of facing the past, dealing with the perpetrators of war crimes, and acknowledging the responsibility and involvement of the state in war crimes and the conflicts in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ) have always been



one of the most – if not the most – contentious issues in Serbian society. They have divided and continue to divide not only the political and power elite, but the population itself, with opinions ranging from those who believe that Serbia was the primary, even sole victim in the conflicts, thus viewing the persons indicted for war crimes as heroes, and scapegoats, to those who place the entire burden of responsibility for the conflicts on the Serbian state and its elite, and view indicted war criminals precisely as such. There is also a segment of the population that holds a kind of middle ground, arguing that all sides in the conflicts share responsibility, and that all villains should be condemned, without exception.<sup>1</sup> A good example of this division and ambiguity can be seen through Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY, and perceptions of the trials in the Serbian public.

### **A. Cooperation with and perceptions of the ICTY**

In terms of cooperation with the ICTY, popularly known as the Hague Tribunal, there have been several phases since its establishment in 1993, which reflect and were influenced by Serbia's political power shifts. In the first period, prior to October 2000, cooperation with the ICTY was at its worst, as then president Milosevic refused to cooperate and even acknowledge the court.<sup>2</sup> Following the October 5th, 2000, democratic changes, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic made significant efforts to

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Marketing Research, Stavovi prema ratnim zlocinima, Haskom Tribunalu I domacem pravosuđu za ratne zlocine [Attitudes toward war crimes, the Hague Tribunal and the local justice system for war crimes], April 2009, available at: <[http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125](http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125)> accessed on 12. April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> However, even during this period, some indictees were arrested and delivered to the Hague. The first ones, Drazen Erdemovic and Radoslav Kremenovic, were arrested by the authorities in Vojvodina, in 1996. In 1998, Stevan Todorovic was arrested and delivered to the Hague. In April 2000, Dragan Nikolic 'Yankee' was apprehended and extradited.

cooperate with the ICTY. The most notable example of this cooperation was Slobodan Milosevic's extradition to the Hague on June 28th, 2001. However, precisely Milosevic's case reflects the deep divisions within the government at that time concerning the matter – then Yugoslav president Vojislav Kostunica denounced the extradition as illegal and unconstitutional.<sup>3</sup> Another case in point is the 9 day uprising<sup>4</sup> by the notorious 'Red Berets'<sup>5</sup> special forces,<sup>6</sup> whose main demand was to halt cooperation and extraditions (Crvenkape I vukovi 2001). The assassination of

<sup>3</sup> At the time, the Serbian parliament had not yet passed the law regulating cooperation with the ICTY and extraditions.

<sup>4</sup> The 'Red Berets' unit threatened to overthrow the government, marched on the capital, blocked major roads, and issued a series of demands that called for the cessation of all cooperation with the Hague until parliament passes a specific law, and an assurance that the unit would not be required to make any future arrests of Hague indictees. Prime Minister Djindjic did not give in to their major demand regarding cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, but did compromise on a number of other issues and did not punish the unit in any way for the rebellion. Serbia: Djindjic Red Beret Dilemma - Zoran Djindjic risks losing American financial aid if he fails to end a revolt by special forces, 16. November 2001, <<http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/serbia-djindjic-red-beret-dilemma>>.

<sup>5</sup> The 'Red Berets' were formed in Knin in April 1991, as a special unit of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior (MUP), and later a special unit of the Serbian State Security. In 1994 the unit became specialized for anti-terrorist action. In 1996, it was reorganized and renamed as the Unit for Special Operations, headed by Milorad Ulemek Legija, who was tried for the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic. The unit was disbanded following the assassination of PM Djindjic, on March 12, 2003. Some of its members were put on trial for this crime, while others joined the Serbian Gendarmerie or other special units in the Serbian MUP. Still others were accused, and sentenced for committing war crimes. See (Dulović, J, Švarn, F 2003) See also the official website of the red berets, <<http://www.crveneberetke.com/>>, for information the unit members posted about themselves and their perception of their history, heroism and patriotism, and legacy (as well as other interesting things such as songs, diaries, a photo gallery, and books).

<sup>6</sup> Serbia: Red Beret Revolt - A rebellion by special forces this week threatened to overthrow the Serbian government, 13. November 2001, <<http://www.iwpr.net/report-news/serbia-red-beret-revolt>>.

Prime Minister Djindjic, linked with his fight against organized crime and the Hague indictees,<sup>7</sup> is a gruesome example of how contentious the issue of war crimes and responsibility was in Serbia at the time.

The post-Djindjic government continued to cooperate with the ICTY, albeit amid deep political rifts and disagreement. In order to placate the population who believed the accused were in fact Serbian heroes and patriots,<sup>8</sup> certain indictees were seen off to the Hague with ‘patriotic’ honors,<sup>9</sup> and in March 2004 the law on financial assistance to indicted war criminals was adopted (Grubanovic 2004), with only slight opposition in parliament, but a massive public outcry from various segments of Serbian society.<sup>10</sup>

Following the February 2008 elections, the coalition government led by President Boris Tadic significantly improved its cooperation with the ICTY. In July 2008, Radovan Karadzic was arrested in Belgrade and extradited to the ICTY.<sup>11</sup> Serbia has continued

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<sup>7</sup> It is speculated that one of the reasons for the rebellion, and later, for the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic, was that many of the members of this special unit were to be indicted for war crimes and extradited to the Hague.

<sup>8</sup> According to an opinion survey from April 2001, the most frequently cited national heroes were Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, precisely the most notorious ICTY indictees (Artz 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Vojislav Seselj was seen off to the Hague with a lot of fanfare. There were also cases when ministers in the Serbian government accompanied the indicted war criminals all the way to the prison in the Netherlands. It should be noted that such ‘patriotic honors’ were also common in Zagreb (Stefanović 2004).

<sup>10</sup> It also led to the US withholding financial aid to Serbia.

<sup>11</sup> In December 2008, ICTY Chief Prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, declared before the UN Security Council that Serbia is ‘fully cooperating’ with the Tribunal, and commended the Serbian authorities on the arrests of Stojan Župljanin and Radovan Karadžić; the Prosecutor stated that ‘they were the result of improved effective leadership and coordination between political and judicial authorities, and security services.’ See Prosecutor Brammertz’s address before the Security Council, 12. December 2008, at <<http://www.icty.org/sid/10031>>.

to cooperate with the ICTY in terms of bringing to justice the remaining top two indictees – Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic, who remain at large. Serbia’s future in joining the European Union (EU) in fact hinges on the arrest of the former (Beta 2010).

In terms of perceptions of the ICTY, surveys conducted every year since 2000 consistently indicate that the general Serbian attitude has remained quite negative,<sup>12</sup> and that the majority of Serbian citizens consider the tribunal biased, unobjective and unfair. In 2000, more than 72 percent of those polled thought that the ‘Hague Tribunal’ threatened the safety of Serbs. Nine years later, in 2009, 30% had a negative attitude toward the ICTY, while 48% expressed an extremely negative attitude. Almost 40% considered the court to be unjust, biased and unobjective, while more than 30% claimed that the court judges and blames only Serbs. Also, more than 70% of Serbs thought that the trials at the Hague Tribunal did not contribute to the reconciliation process in the region.<sup>13</sup>

Sampson and Bartusch (1998) argue that in contexts where individuals and groups are faced with the inability to influence the structures of power that constrain their lives, cynicism and perceptions of legal injustice arise – in fact, Sampson and Bartusch use the term ‘legal cynicism.’ As many have noted, the sense of victimization, and not just in the most recent conflicts, is strong in Serbia, as in other parts of the former Yugoslavia, and can even be considered an integral element of

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<sup>12</sup> See Strategic Marketing Research, Stavovi prema ratnim zlocinima, Haskom Tribunalu I domacem pravosudju za ratne zlocine [Attitudes toward war crimes, the Hague Tribunal and local justice system for war crimes], April 2009, available at: <[http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125](http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125)> accessed on 12. April 2010.

<sup>13</sup> In the past few years there has consistently been a downward trend in terms of opinions about cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and its legitimacy and impartiality; in 2009 only 55% believed that Serbia should cooperate, in comparison to 84% in 2003.

its national consciousness (Silber and Little 1995). Bandovic (2004, p. 93) attributes these persistent negative attitudes to the popular belief in Serbia that there is ‘an international conspiracy against the Serbs’ and that ‘only Serbs are on trial and that they receive harsh punishment, while all the other trials are just a farce and an excuse for prosecuting the Serbs.’ The reason for such beliefs, Wilson (2005, p. 941) suggests, is that ‘any historical account which punctures nationalist mythologies is likely to be rejected as long as a region is dominated by nationalist politicians who have regularly denied responsibility for mass atrocities.’

Hagan and Kutnjak Ivkovic (2006, p. 134) explain that even though in the wars in the former Yugoslavia there were no formally declared victors, the ICTY’s ‘court outcomes symbolically [calibrate] who are considered the defeated and defended through the sentencing of convicted offenders representing former warring parties.’ In writing judgments, the ICTY is simultaneously writing the history of the conflict (Donia 2004)<sup>14</sup> - the events, the victims and the villains. In the majority of Tribunal cases, the Serbs constitute the villains, and the defeated, while Bosnians and Kosovo Albanians are the victims, and the defended; the Croats are somewhere in between.<sup>15</sup> It is no wonder then that the ICTY has persistently received the highest approval ratings in Bosnia and Kosovo, while being almost completely rejected in Serbia and

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson (2005, p. 941) observes that ‘international tribunals such as the ICTY are altering the relationship between law and history.’

<sup>15</sup> Robert Kempner, a leading war crimes prosecutor described the Nuremberg trials as ‘The greatest history seminar ever held.’ His words capture the dual goal of war crimes trials – to submit legal judgment, and to provide a full and accurate historical record. See Bloxham 2001.

However, Hannah Arendt (1968) criticized the Eichmann trial process precisely because of the notion of legal justice serving also as a historical record and a moral lesson. She argued that the trial’s purpose should be to render justice, and only that, while all other purposes threaten to distort the justice process and turn the trial into a legal farce.

the Republika Srpska.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the same study reveals the insistence of Serbs to see Serbian war criminals tried in Serbia (Hagan & Kutnjak Ivković, 2006, p. 141).

In certain environments, tribunals and war crimes trials actually strengthen the sense of injustice and victimization, which fuel conflicts, and further deepen the rift between ethnic groups. In demonizing only one side, and assigning exclusive victim and villain roles, a verdict can fuel the underlying causes of the conflict, instead of building peace. This is one of the most important reasons why a majority of Serbs mistrust the Hague Tribunal, and prefer ‘at home’ trials. Dimitrijevic (2005) points out the negative perceptions of the ICTY in Serbia are partially a failure of the court’s PR strategy, saying that ‘justice must be done and be seen to be done.’ And as studies show, in order to be seen as legitimate, legal justice must also be seen as local justice.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Public opinion surveys from 2002 conducted by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance reveal a pattern of responses to the ICTY that range from high regard in Kosovo (83% approval), through acceptance in Bosnia (51 % approval), to rejection in Serbia and the Republika Srpska (4 to 8% approval). In Hagan and Kutnjak Ivkovic’s study, the ICTY received the most support in Pristina (65.1%), while it received the least support in Belgrade (18.4%), with Vukovar (34.3%) and Sarajevo (44.1%) in between. Their research also reveals that around 30% of Croats are not enthusiastic in their support of the ICTY. Their most recent research indicates that Bosnians have moved from an earlier position of strong support for the work of the ICTY to a more recent position of skepticism that questions the political neutrality of ICTY judges. It is interesting to note that according to their study, Serbs living in Sarajevo and Vukovar are about twice as likely to support the ICTY as are Serbs living in Belgrade. See Hagan and Kutnjak Ivkovic 2006, p. 137-144.

<sup>17</sup> The President of the ICTY, Judge Claude Jorda, emphasized that national trials would ‘further promote the new national reconciliation processes the Balkan states are setting up.’ He noted that by making ‘the trial of the cases referred before the national courts more transparent to the local population,’ would be a ‘more effective contribution to reconciling the peoples of the Balkans.’ Address of President Jorda to the Security Council, 27 November 2001, UN Doc. No. S/PV.4429, page 4.

## B. Local mechanisms for dealing with war crimes and war crimes trials in Serbia

In order to establish a local war crimes trial mechanism that would be perceived as more objective and unbiased toward Serbs,<sup>18</sup> and consequently contribute to regional reconciliation,<sup>19</sup> the special department for adjudicating in trials against perpetrators of war crimes<sup>20</sup> was formed at the District Court in Belgrade, in October 2003,<sup>21</sup> following the passing of the Law on the organization and competence of state bodies in the proceedings against war crimes perpetrators.<sup>22</sup> It plays a crucial role not only in bringing to justice perpetrators of war crimes, but also in influencing Serbian public

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18 As Rikhof (2009) argues, if the goal is not only to address the past but also provide remedies and deterrents for the future, domestic, rather than international courts, are most suitable. He reminds that this is also recognized in the statute of the ICC.

19 In addition to these recognized benefits, the establishment of a special judicial body to deal with war crimes in Serbia became part of the ICTY's 'completion strategy.' See Williams 2006. The 'completion strategy' arose from the need to bring the Tribunal to a close, and to complete all work in 2010, in order to reduce the high amount of expenses it was incurring with investigations, trials and detention. See Resolution 1503, paragraph 7.

20 Up to that point, the competence to try war crimes cases in Serbia belonged to ordinary criminal law jurisdictions in all district courts in the country. Only seven war crimes trials took place between 1996 and 2003. The spokesperson of the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor (OWCP), Bruno Vekarić, says that during this period war crimes in Serbia were covered up, and that the trials were a farce (very often in the literal sense of this word, as the audience at the trials would be cheering for the defendants). See his interview in (Šterić 2008) For more details about these trials see *War Crimes before Domestic Courts*, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, Belgrade, October 2003, pp. 7–10.

21 Since 2003, the WCC has had 80 investigations, involving 339 persons, and is currently processing 25 cases, involving 120 persons. There have been 29 first grade processes, with 98 persons, and there are currently 9 such cases, with 43 persons. The court issued 16 sentences, condemning 34 persons, and releasing 12 persons. <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/PREDMETI\\_ENG.HTM](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/PREDMETI_ENG.HTM)>

22 <[http://www.okruznisudbg.rs/war\\_crime\\_department\\_about](http://www.okruznisudbg.rs/war_crime_department_about)> accessed on 10. April 2010.

opinion about the trials and the past (Ivanisevic 2007). The Serbian human rights community, the ICTY, and representatives of international organizations all generally support the work of the WCC and the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor (OWCP)<sup>23</sup> as a contribution to efforts to establish accountability for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia. The Prosecutor, Vladimir Vukcevic, has become well known for his tough stance on war crimes, his insistence on bringing perpetrators to justice, and his awareness of the power of the media and public debate.<sup>24</sup> He has also been credited for his excellent cooperation with the ICTY. One of the indications of just how difficult his work is in Serbia, and how divisive the subject of war crimes continues to be, are the almost daily death threats he receives (*RTS* 2008). This is symptomatic of the unfavorable political context in Serbia when it comes to war crimes trials.<sup>25</sup> As

<sup>23</sup> The Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor (OWCP) was founded on July 1st, 2003, with the intention of prosecuting the perpetrators of criminal offences against humanity and international law. On July 23rd, 2003, the National Assembly elected Vladimir Vukcevic as the War Crimes Prosecutor. <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/O\\_NAMA\\_ENG.HTM](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/O_NAMA_ENG.HTM)> accessed on 10. April 2010.

<sup>24</sup> According to information provided by the OWCP, the Prosecutor and his efforts have been the subject of increasing media attention, so that references to the office appeared in 2009 five times more than in 2003. In 88% of these references the OWCP was positively characterized, in contrast to 12% where the portrayal of the office was negative. In 2008, the Prosecutor and his deputy were voted the most communicative persons in Serbia. The Prosecutor and the deputy Prosecutor also recently cooperated on the making of a feature film, 'Ordinary People,' where the main character plays the Prosecutor's deputy. The film aims to draw the public's attention to all the aspects of processing war crimes. See (Petrović 2010)

<sup>25</sup> The previous government did not support the work of the WCC and the OWCP. The justice minister even initially questioned the need for the OWCP and the WCC to exist but reportedly backed off when the opposition parties and the international community vigorously objected. Even though the new government, starting with President Tadic, has made greater commitments, both verbal and concrete, to the process of bringing justice to victims of war crimes, serious problems remain. Nationalists (such as the Serbian Radical Party) and the old Milosevic elite (such as the Socialist Party of Serbia), are both tacitly and vocally against domestic war crimes prosecutions, and their opposition weakens the resolve and effectiveness of the actors involved in the process.



Florence Hartmann, former spokesperson for the ICTY, states, the work of the local war crimes court is very difficult, because of great political and societal pressure and opposition, and slim support; she explains that it 'is perceived as a foreign body, but since it's domestic, it can be somewhat controlled. In such circumstances, it's no wonder that the court avoids being too bold, and that it concentrates primarily on the trigger-pullers.' (Šterić 2008)

Despite the obstacles to the work of the WCC and the OWCP,<sup>26</sup> recent surveys<sup>27</sup> show that most Serbian citizens favor trials in local courts, and evaluate them more favorably. For example, 46% of Serbs believe that local trials contribute to finding out the truth about certain events. Further, most citizens also believe that domestic war crimes trials enhance the process of regional reconciliation, and are more successful in achieving that goal than trials at the Hague Tribunal. In contrast to the mistrust that is prevalent when it comes to the ICTY, the local court also enjoys more credibility, as 57% state that when Serbs are found guilty it is based on concrete evidence and thus accept the verdicts. However, according to the same research, the main problem seems to be

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<sup>26</sup> According to the report 'Dealing with impunity in Serbia: Options and obstacles,' those who seek to combat impunity 'are intimidated in their work by a much larger body that is either opposed to the painful and costly process of admitting wrongdoing, or is actively, sometimes violently, working against it. As a result, even where adequate, sometimes exemplary institutions, frameworks or procedures exist, ways are generally found to block or undermine them. See *Dealing with impunity in Serbia: options and obstacles*, Impunity Watch, July 2009, available at <<http://citycellar.com/balkanwitness/Impunity-Serbia.htm>>, accessed 28. September 2010.

<sup>27</sup> See Strategic Marketing Research, Stavovi prema ratnim zločinima, Haskom Tribunalu I domacem pravosudju za ratne zlocine [Attitudes toward war crimes, the Hague Tribunal and the local justice system for war crimes], April 2009, available at: <[http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125](http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125)> accessed on 12. April 2010.

public awareness about the trials. In fact, over 70% could not name even one war crimes trial in a local court. Yet, the majority of those who were informed (9%) cited the ‘Scorpions’ trial.

### c. The ‘Scorpions’ case

The ‘Scorpions’ case officially began in June 2005, when, at the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, the ICTY aired video footage of members of the paramilitary unit ‘the Scorpions’<sup>28</sup> executing six Bosnian Muslims, in the vicinity of Trnovo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1995. The tape was recorded by the executioners themselves, and it shows six Bosnian Muslims brought to a field, with their hands tied behind their backs. After vulgar harassment, the ‘Scorpions’ execute four of them; two are temporarily spared in order to transport the corpses to a nearby house, where they are

<sup>28</sup> According to information given in the indictment, at the trial, and in the press, the unit, first called ‘Boca’ (after the nickname of the commander Slobodan Medic) was formed in 1991, officially by the ‘Republika Srpska Krajina Oil Industry,’ to guard oil rigs in the village of Djeletovci and the surrounding area, close to the Croatian border. In 1993, the unit was re-named the ‘Scorpions.’ In their testimony at the trial, the accused stated that the name was changed because many of the unit’s members had previously worked in Iraq, and brought back with them scorpions as souvenirs. Another version is that the unit’s name comes from the name of a gun – the Scorpion. The unit originally had 200 people, and was under the command of the Vukovar Corps, and general Dusan Loncar. Over the next several years the unit gathered a high number of men. In 1993, the ‘Scorpions’ were sent to Bihac, and in 1994 to Velika Kladusa, where they participated in the inter-Bosnian conflict, on the side of Fikret Abdic. Following that, they were sent to Trnovo, where they were under the command of the Sarajevo-Romanija Corps, and general Dragomir Milosevic (indicted by the ICTY). In 1996 the ‘Scorpions’ merged with the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit of the Serbian Police, and in March of 1999 were sent to Kosovo. Members of the unit have been indicted for war crimes in Kosovo, and one received a 20 year sentence for crimes in Podujevo. See (Čarnić 2007) (Roknić 2007) See also the indictment of the Scorpions, at <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/OPTUZNICE/O\\_2006\\_10\\_09\\_LAT.pdf](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/OPTUZNICE/O_2006_10_09_LAT.pdf)>

also executed, and burned together with the others. When the footage was aired at the ICTY and then broadcast on television, it shocked the world, and the Serbian public.<sup>29</sup>

Serbian authorities immediately arrested five of the ‘Scorpions’ seen on tape<sup>30</sup> and indicted the commander of the unit, Slobodan Medic, as well as Branislav Medic, Pero Petrasevic, Aleksandar Medic and Aleksandar Vukov for the execution of six Bosnian Muslims from Srebrenica – Azmir Alispahic (17), Safet Fejzic (17), Sidik Salkic (36), Smail Ibrahimovic (35), Juso Delic (16), and Dino Salihovic (20), in Godinjske Bare, close to Trnovo, in July 1995.<sup>31</sup>

The trial started in November 2005, and ended on April 20th, 2007. Mid-way into the trial, the indictments against Aleksandar Medic and Aleksandar Vukov were changed from participation in the execution of the crime to aiding the murder of the six victims. Vukov, the unit’s deputy commander, was acquitted, on the grounds that he wasn’t involved in the execution. Aleksandar Medic received a 5 year sentence; the court decided it was a mitigating circumstance that he didn’t actually pull the trigger and

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<sup>29</sup> The reaction of the media was to increase coverage related to Srebrenica. In the 30 months prior to the video broadcast, the Serbian press had published 1,492 articles related to Srebrenica; in just three weeks following the broadcast, 676 articles came out (Sajkas 2007, p. 11). See also Ebart Media Documentation survey from 2005 titled ‘Serbian Media about Srebrenica 1/1 2003 – 6/24/2005’ page 3, available <<http://www.arhiv.co.yu/pdf/Srebrenica.pdf>>.

<sup>30</sup> Tatjana Tagirov points out that those arrested were living peacefully, mostly in Vojvodina, as ‘regular people’ and ‘quiet neighbors.’ See (Tagirov 2007) The other ‘Scorpions’ seen on tape were not apprehended. One of them, Slobodan Davidovic, was sentenced for the same crime by the court in Zagreb to 15 years in prison, while three others, Milorad Momic, and two known only by their nicknames ‘Djole Siptar’ and ‘Momo Turcin,’ are still at large.

<sup>31</sup> The full text of the indictment is available in Serbian at <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/OPTUZNICE/O\\_2006\\_10\\_09\\_LAT.pdf](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/OPTUZNICE/O_2006_10_09_LAT.pdf)>, and in English at <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/OPTUZNICE/O\\_2006\\_10\\_09\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/OPTUZNICE/O_2006_10_09_ENG.pdf)>.

shoot.<sup>32</sup> Slobodan Medic and Branislav Medic received the maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, while Pero Petrasevic – the only one who admitted guilt and repented – was sentenced to 13 years.<sup>33</sup>

In the verdict the court disassociated the activities of the Scorpions unit from the events in Srebrenica during the same period. The President of the judicial council, Gordana Bozilovic-Petrovic, explained that the court could not establish that the victims were from Srebrenica, despite the testimonies of family members, and the statements of the accused confirming that the prisoners were from Srebrenica.<sup>34</sup> The judicial council also denied the connection of the unit to the Serbian state, while the HLC and others claimed that the Scorpions were part of the Serbian special police forces.<sup>35</sup> Despite the claims of the accused to the contrary, Judge Bozilovic-Petrovic stated that the ‘Scorpions’ were a paramilitary unit, because even though the unit had its own military postal service, it was under the command of the Vukovar Corps of the

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32 Even though on the tape he’s seen assisting in the execution, heckling the victims, and in one segment asks one of the underage boys if he ever ‘f...’ and when the boy answers no, he tells him ‘and you won’t, ever!’

33 The Prosecution appealed to the Serbian Supreme Court (SSC), in relation to the sentence for Pero Petrasevic and Aleksandar Medic, and requested a 20 year sentence for both. The SSC confirmed Petrasevic’s sentence, while it overturned Aleksandar Medic’s sentence and returned it to the WCC for another trial. In January 2009, Aleksandar Medic was convicted again and sentenced to 5 years. The Serbian Supreme Court confirmed the 20 year sentence of Slobodan Medic, while reducing the sentence of Branislav Medic from 20 to 15 years (Čolak 2007)

34 District Court in Belgrade (War Crimes Chamber), *Prosecutor v. Slobodan Medić et al.*, Case no. K.V. 6/2005 (Scorpions case), Judgment, 10. April 2007., 108.

35 At the trial, Natasa Kandic brought up an example to illustrate and support this claim; namely, Aleksandar Vukov is receiving his war invalid pension and benefits from the Republic of Serbia, and not from the Republika Srpska Krajina.

Republika Srpska Krajina, which was a self-proclaimed and never internationally recognized state ((E.P. 2007).

The *Scorpions* verdict sparked intense debate about the involvement of Serbian state structures in the Bosnian conflict, and more specifically the Srebrenica massacre, the implications of the tape and the execution for public memory and facing the past, as well as issues regarding the effectiveness of local war crimes trials, and the independence of the court and the Prosecutor. It provoked much criticism from legal experts and the non-governmental sector. The leading human rights group in Serbia, the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), which represented the victims in this trial, accused the judges of being 'led by political rather than legal reasons.'<sup>36</sup>

The trial received a lot of media attention in Serbia. The television coverage differed from the print media reporting, as, particularly toward the end of the trial and when the verdict was rendered, there were numerous debates and various notable legal and political experts expressed their opinions. The print media reported more consistently on the trial, and provided in-depth coverage of its details, but there were very few discussions of the verdict and the meaning of the trial for regional reconciliation and facing the past.

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<sup>36</sup> See Humanitarian Law Center, 'Scorpions Verdict Politically Motivated' (press release), 12. April 2007. Only months before, in January 2007, the HLC expressed the opinion that 'the War Crimes Chamber of the District Court in Belgrade performs its judicial functions professionally, objectively, and impartially. The judges acting in war crimes cases strictly respect the law, in keeping with the principles of a fair trial.' Humanitarian Law Center, *Bilten 'Tranziciona pravda': Su enja za ratne zločine u Srbiji* ('Bulletin 'Transitional Justice': War Crimes Trials in Serbia'), 11. January 2007.

## **Section 2 – Media, war crimes trials and national ideologies**

### **A. The role of the media in war crimes trials and facing the past**

What is significant for this study is that the media reporting was also not discussed and analyzed, even though the role of the media is crucial in war crimes trials and shaping public memory (Hauser 1998, 1999, Hasian 1997, Hasian and Frank 1999). As Burkhardt (2008) argues, in relation to the two big ‘Holocaust’ trials of the 1960s, the ‘Eichmann’ and the ‘Auschwitz’ trials, the media are essential in what she calls ‘transmitted testimony.’ In reporting the testimonies from the trial, the media become second-degree witnesses. The public’s perception of the trial is refracted on two levels – through witness statements, and through the media’s reporting about those statements.

Many scholars have emphasized the incredible transformative potential of positive media messages in post-conflict contexts, and indeed argued that the media is essential in promoting and facilitating reconciliation, by transforming negative stereotypes and reducing prejudice (Darby and MacGinty 2003, Lynch 2005, Wolfsfeld 2004, Howard, R, Van de Veen and Verhoeven 2003, Price and Thompson 2002). The positive impact of media coverage can be seen particularly in cases where war crimes trials were brought to the public’s attention, and where the quality of such coverage changed negative stereotypes, preconceptions, and national ideologies that fostered conflict. For example, in South Africa, the media is largely credited with the success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Verdoolaege 2005).

Likewise, scholars have pointed out that during the Nuremberg trial radio broadcasts were instrumental in bringing about reconciliation with the general public of defeated Germany (Wolf 2006). The same positive role was played by the media in the ‘Eichmann’ (1961) and the ‘Auschwitz’ trials (1963-1965). They were both major

media events,<sup>37</sup> and had a strong impact on world-wide perceptions of the Holocaust (Wolf 2004, p. 38). The trials were innovative at the time, as they relied heavily on witness statements, i.e. statements of Holocaust survivors. The public, internationally, relied on the media as a source of information about the witness statements. This was significant because it was the first time that the experiences of the Holocaust survivors were broadcast at such a public level and with such diffusion (Burkhardt 2008). This exerted a strong influence on the general knowledge about the Holocaust in many countries (Crespi 1964),<sup>38</sup> and certain images of the Holocaust were firmly established. As Douglas (2001, p. 10) says, the Eichmann trial in particular, ‘served to create the Holocaust.’

In France, three notable war crimes trials took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The first was the trial of Klaus Barbie, which was greeted as an occasion for self-improvement (Binder, 1989), an opportunity to educate new generations, and to deepen the public’s understanding of the past. The second trial was that of Paul Trouvier (1994), which, as Wexler argues, became a trial not just of one man, but the whole of French society during WWII. It became a way to produce an authoritative judgment of the various public discourses concerning Vichy France (Sadat Wexler 1995). The third, and

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<sup>37</sup> Certainly the most famous trial coverage is Hannah Arendt’s reporting on the Eichmann trial for *The New Yorker*, which later grew into the book ‘Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil,’ where Arendt coined the phrase ‘the banality of evil’ in referring to Eichmann, to describe the human tendency to obey orders, and conform, without critically thinking about the results of their actions, or inaction.

<sup>38</sup> Crespi’s study shows that the Eichmann trial attracted the attention not only of the Israeli public, but also of an overwhelming majority of Americans, and that following intense media reports about the trial, the reaction of Americans was increased sympathy for Israel and Jews. Crespi cites a Gallup Poll, according to which 87 per cent of adult Americans had heard or read about the trial and almost three-fourths were very or fairly interested in it.

perhaps most famous trial, was that of Maurice Papon (1997-1998), former Vichy functionary and Gaullist minister. It was supposed to offer an exemplary and final judgment on Vichy complicity in the Final Solution (Golsan 2000). All three trials were subjects of enormous media attention, as they sparked discussions about the Vichy Regime, WWII France, the link between justice, history and memory, and the Holocaust in France (Wolf 2004). The media in these cases became the vehicle for a debate on the legitimacy and activities of the Vichy Regime and the French people during WWII. Further, through media attention these trials became commemorative events, another form of public remembrance (Rousso 2002, Jean and Salas 2002).<sup>39</sup>

## **B. Serbian media coverage of war crimes trials**

War crimes trials and issues related to past conflicts are very popular and widely covered topics in the Serbian media, according to research done by *Ebart Consulting Media Documentation*. They specify, however, that media attention is focused more heavily on issues related to reconciliation, while news dealing with guilt and ethnic

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<sup>39</sup> These trials were also shaped in predictably bipolar ways in the media, similar to, as Rousso (2002) argues, the exigencies of the legal system. The French people of that era were thus divided into the good and the bad, and there was a lack of richer interpretation of the options, choices and mentalities. The coverage was also quite superficial, in its concern with irrelevant details. There were, however, examples where the media gave the victims and plaintiffs a platform to air their grievances, not only with the accused, but also the legal system and the proceedings themselves, and to discuss other, previously unexamined, aspects and periods of French history. One such example was the Papon Trial website, created by the French regional daily newspaper Sud-Ouest, which hosted a daily online column by the first plaintiff against Papon – Jean-Marie Matisson, who commented on the proceedings directly from the courtroom. See Bruno Giussani, Using the web to confront France’s Vichy past, *The New York Times*, 21.10.1997.



cleansing is much less popular.<sup>40</sup> For several years, the ICTY has been by far the most widely covered press topic.<sup>41</sup> While Slobodan Milosevic was in power, the ICTY was completely demonized and portrayed as a criminal institution established with the intention of punishing only Serbs. Following the democratic changes in 2000, the coverage of the ICTY started to improve year by year, as media monitors noted that even outlets that were notorious for their lack of professionalism (such as RTS and Vecernje Novosti) had stopped using hate language in relation to the ICTY, and had stopped openly defending accused and sentenced war criminals (Radosavljevic 2002). This does not mean, however, that indirect criticism of the war crimes trials and support for the accused Serbs does not make its way into media reporting. In fact, through the selection of topics, interviewees and viewpoints, much criticism of the ICTY is present in general media reports (Rankovic 2002). These attitudes are fueled by messages from the political elite, who speak about cooperation with the ICTY as a necessary evil, and emphasize the support the state provides to the indictees and their families. In fact, as Dimitrijevic notes, particularly following the 2000 democratic changes, it became apparent that actually the Serbian media considered opposing the Hague Tribunal a matter of national interest,

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40 See [www.arhiv.rs](http://www.arhiv.rs)

41 For example, in 2003, media monitoring registered 8418 articles related to the Tribunal, while 2178 articles covered topics related to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

preserving national pride and defending its honor, rather than a matter of state politics (Dimitrijevic 2005).<sup>42</sup>

As has been noted by media monitors such as Impunity Watch, the Serbian media tend to report on ICTY criminal cases only from the point of view of the indicted, without giving any attention to the victims: ‘talk of victims is noticeably absent, and any notion of reparations strongly condemned.’<sup>43</sup> And while there is extensive coverage of the trial proceedings and statements of various local and international officials, there is no in-depth discussion about the reasons behind war crimes and the context in which

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<sup>42</sup> Dimitrijevic also points out that some media outlets, in an attempt to provide the Serbian public with a complete account of the Milosevic trial, unwittingly aided him, and others like him (such as Seselj), to transmit widely their defense, and to influence internal politics from the courtroom in the Hague.

For example, the beginning of the trial against Vojislav Seselj at the ICTY was aired on Serbian television and was watched by an estimated 800,000 people. All newspapers reported as front-page news excerpts from his defense, and his accusations against the international community. See Balkan Magazin, Javno Mnjenje – Seselj na televiziji, 21. November 2007., available at <[http://www.balkanmagazin.net/kolumna/javno\\_mnjenje/seselj\\_na\\_televiziji.xhtml](http://www.balkanmagazin.net/kolumna/javno_mnjenje/seselj_na_televiziji.xhtml)>.

Seselj followed the strategy established by Milosevic - deny the court’s legitimacy, mount a strong defense, and directly address not the court, but the Serbian public, through extensive media coverage. The TV Station B92 is a case in point. In an effort to promote facing the past in Serbia, it decided to provide live coverage of the Milosevic trial, as well as excerpts of other important trials, with only occasional commentary by legal experts. However, their coverage also sparked criticism that it actually benefited Milosevic, and others on trial, as they were able to reach their target audience and encourage their followers in Serbia. Critics argued that it was counterproductive, as it gave a lot of air-time to political speeches by those accused of war crimes and reproduced their hate speech.

<sup>43</sup> See Dealing with impunity in Serbia: options and obstacles, Impunity Watch, July 2009, available at <<http://citycellar.com/balkanwitness/Impunity-Serbia.htm>>, accessed 28. September 2010.

they occurred, and no commentary of the issues (Radosavljevic 2002). The media fuel the impression that the ICTY is unjust toward Serbs, and thus foster Serbia's victim complex in relation to its neighbors, the international community and the ICTY.

The media coverage of local war crimes trials exhibits the same characteristics and patterns in its reporting.<sup>44</sup> One of the leading lawyers involved in war crimes trials, Dragoljub Todorovic, from the HLC, estimates that local war crimes trials are not given enough attention in the Serbian press (Jovanovic 2010) – they are not followed by societal dialogue about the crimes, the responsibility of the state, and there is particularly no interest in the victims, and no implications for future generations.<sup>45</sup> The coverage of the trials is characterized mostly by reproductions of official statements (Radulovic 2010), and by giving ample space to those accused of the worst war crimes to mount and express their defense (Milosevic 2006). Media monitoring reports consistently show that most reports do not dwell much on the criminal activities of the accused, but rather turn their attention to a romanticized version of their war past, transmit indiscriminately statements denying guilt and responsibility, and publish elaborate interviews about the patriotism and bravery of the accused (Susa et al 2006).

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<sup>44</sup> When it comes to local war crimes trials, surveys show about one quarter of the Serbian population trust the media, and believe that the media report objectively about domestic trial proceedings. About two thirds of the population, however, believe that the public is not sufficiently informed about the issue. See Strategic Marketing Research, Stavovi prema ratnim zlocinima, Haskom Tribunalu I domacem pravosudju za ratne zlocine [Attitudes toward war crimes, the Hague Tribunal and local justice system for war crimes], April 2009, available at: <[http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125](http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125)> accessed on 12. April 2010.

<sup>45</sup> See Sudjenja za ratne zlocine u Srbiji, Pescanik, 19.12.2007, available at <<http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/1097/65/>>, accessed 23. September 2010.

More often than not, the accused are portrayed as war heroes, innocent victims and scapegoats of political games and international conspiracies.

### C. Media and national ideologies in conflict

This kind of reporting can be understood in terms of the relationship between media and national ideologies. As Benedict Anderson (1991) demonstrates in his seminal work on ‘imagined communities,’<sup>46</sup> the media enable the creation of and participation in the ‘imagined community’ – the nation.<sup>47</sup> As one of the main ideological institutions or Ideological Apparatus (Althusser 1984), they are essential in reproducing national ideologies. Through public discourse, the media play a vital role in shaping identity (Schudson 1995), forming public consciousness, and influencing the popularity, or popular support, of public policy (Fowler 1991, Kellner 1995, Neuman, Just and Crigler 1992, Parenti 1986, Weimann 2000). As Wardle and West say, ‘the press serve as agents of nationalism, providing one of the most visible and therefore powerful forums that actively keep questions of national identity on the agenda’ (Wardle and West 2004, p. 200).

And Raymond Williams (1975) reminds, journalists are not immune to the cultural assumptions or structures of feeling that infuse their cultural milieu – they are part of society, and as such they subscribe to the national ideologies that form it. In fact, one

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<sup>46</sup> He defines the nation as ‘an imagined political community,’ imagined as limited, sovereign, perennial, and as engendering intense emotions that bind people together.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson (1991, p. 4) explains that ‘nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word’s multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind,’ and ‘nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.’ These cultural artifacts ‘command profound emotional legitimacy and deep attachments.’ Thus, Anderson does not conceptualize nationalism as *an* ideology; he treats it as a phenomenon, like ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’, rather than ‘liberalism’ or ‘fascism.’

of the more enduring findings in communication research concerns the propensity of the news media to reflect and reproduce dominant social attitudes and ideologies (Lefkowitz 2001), and to reinforce the existing distribution of social and political power in society (Croteau and Hoynes 1997).

During times of conflict, tension or contention, when society and the existing order are perceived to be in danger and under threat, the media play an essential role in reinforcing and strengthening national identity (Anderson 1991, Bhabha 1990, Bruner 2002, Clay 1996). The media can justify, and even incite direct violence, thus facilitating conflict (Buric 2000, Des Forges 1999, Kurspahic 2003). Furthermore, they provide narratives that concern national identity, strengthen national unity and cohesiveness, and reinforce ‘our’ version of events (Iyengar 1988, Taylor 2000, Van Dijk 1989, Vincent 2000) – namely that ‘we’ are the victims, while all Others are villains. Such rhetoric generates an effective, general uniformity of thought within the group. Many media theorists have argued that the very structure of the mass media tends to facilitate the establishment of generalized stereotypes (McLuhan 1964, Meyrowitz, 1985), and thus the stereotypical patterns of nationalism are congruous with the way the media function (Anastasiou 2002).

The role of the media as facilitators of conflict is well-documented, particularly in the case of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia (Thompson 2000), where, as Reljic (1998, p. 10) writes:

many journalists became criminals at the writing table. In situations of internal tension and conflict, the media represent a virtual front line. Journalists in such situations are warriors at the front. The spiral of real violence is often prepared first in the media, and then always reinforced further through them. By putting themselves in the service of the political centre of power, they incite and legitimize violence, and thus take part in the conflict.

Reljic’s comment neatly summarizes the role and power of the media in conflict; it also emphasizes the tendency of the media to reproduce hegemonic discourse,

particularly during times of conflict or when it comes to matters of national unity and solidarity.

War crimes trials are matters of national importance – events that seek not only to render legal verdicts, but, as scholars have noted, also influence histories and shape public memories. And even though individuals are tried, the trials very often serve as vehicles for examinations of a collective past and responsibility, and thus such trials can also be understood as threats to national ideologies, which are governed by positive self-perception and negative other-perception (Van Dijk 2000), and the ‘nation.’ Therefore, the print media coverage of the *Scorpions* trial can be contextualized in terms of the broader political and social context in which the trial took place, and the national ideologies that flourish therein.

#### **D. Media on trial**

The first time international justice dealt with the role of media in inciting violence and conflict was after WWII. In 1946, the international court in Nuremberg convicted Julius Streicher, editor and publisher of the paper *Der Sturmer*, to death by hanging, because in his writing he called for the extermination of Jews (Subasic 2009). The second such case is the trial of journalists for their role in spreading hatred in the Rwanda genocide. At the tribunal for Rwanda, in Arusha, the trial against ‘hate media,’ which encouraged the genocide in 1994, began in October 2000. In 2003, life sentences were requested for the persons in charge of Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines,<sup>48</sup> Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean Bosco Barayagwiza, and the director and editor of the Kanguru

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<sup>48</sup> The radio, nicknamed Radio Hate, was the mouthpiece of the extremist Hutu Power movement. At first, it addressed its Tutsi opponents with warnings like ‘You cockroaches must know you are made of flesh. We won’t let you kill, we will kill you.’ But once the massacres had begun, the prosecution said, the broadcasts goaded Hutu militia groups to ‘go to work’ and kept inciting people with messages like ‘the graves are not yet full’ (Simons 2002).

newspaper, Hassan Ngeze, as they were charged with genocide, incitement to genocide, and crimes against humanity, before and during the period of the genocides of 1994. The prosecutors charged that all three were part of a well-prepared plan to use their outlets first to spread ethnic hatred and then to persuade people to kill their enemies, the Tutsi and moderate Hutu. That required demonizing the Tutsi, prosecutors said, and the media played a key role in accomplishing this. In December 2003, the court found all three defendants guilty and sentenced Nahimana and Ngeze to life imprisonment and Barayagwiza to imprisonment for 35 years.<sup>49</sup> These are, as Subasic remarks, rare and extreme examples.

No journalist or media outlet has yet been tried for their role in inciting and perpetuating the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, even though there is general consensus that the conflict itself started precisely in the media (Subasic 2009). However, the Prosecutor for War Crimes in Serbia has announced that in 2009 they had started preparing a case, called '*Media*,' and are in the process of gathering evidence about the role of the Serbian media in the conflicts (Jovanović 2010).<sup>50</sup> At

<sup>49</sup> Their sentences were later reduced to 30 years imprisonment for Nahimana, 32 years imprisonment for Barayagwiza and 35 years imprisonment for Ngeze. See <<http://www.unict.org/>>.

<sup>50</sup> The Independent Association of Serbian Journalists (IASJ) – NUNS in Serbian, filed a lawsuit in June 2009 against certain journalists and managers of media outlets (RTV Beograd, RTV Novi Sad, the dailies Politika and Vecernje Novosti, and others), based on the fact that in the late 80s and early 90s, during the break up of the former Yugoslavia, these media significantly contributed to inciting inter-ethnic hatred and intolerance, and put themselves directly in the service of war propaganda. The OWCP started its investigation at the same time. Media professionals and analysts have divided opinions about this investigation and the IASJ lawsuit. According to one group, it is a task that must be done in order to clean the entire profession from the burden of responsibility and guilt. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the wars are a thing of the past and that it would be pointless to hash it up now; they also claim that during the war, all media, but particularly state-owned media, have a duty to uphold the official political rhetoric. See 'Uloga medija i novinara u ratnim sukobima na području bivše SFRJ' at <<http://www.nuns.rs/dosije/32/07.jsp>>.

the round table, ‘The role of the media and journalists in the conflicts in former SFRJ,’ held in Belgrade, in March 2010,<sup>51</sup> the Prosecutor announced that in the coming months they would publish a report about their findings. Prosecutor Vukcevic stated, ‘We consider that the attitude of the public opinion in Serbia in the 1990s, but also in the region, created half-truths and lies, through a media image that served to feed so-called patriotism, in a way that led to looting, torture and inhumane killing of civilians, prisoners of war, displacement, and destruction’ (*Za sada bez krivičnih postupaka protiv novinara za ratno huškanje* 2010). As the Prosecutor explained, the material gathered so far in the case *Media*, does not provide a basis for starting a criminal trial process, but the investigation is ongoing; he stressed that certain media outlets were very cooperative with their office,<sup>52</sup> while others<sup>53</sup> did not respond to their requests, and thus the OWCP has not yet been able to gather all the necessary evidence (Jovanovic 2010)<sup>54</sup>.

During this round table (Jovanović 2010), the OSCE mission in Serbia representative, Jelena Stevančević, presented results from the opinion poll ‘Knowledge and attitudes toward the Hague Tribunal and local war crimes trials,’

<sup>51</sup> See full transcript at <<http://www.nuns.rs/dosije/32/07.jsp>>.

<sup>52</sup> The cooperative media outlets include the daily *Politika* and the news agency Tanjug. Information according to Bruno Vekarić, spokesperson of the OWCP, available at ‘Uloga medija i novinara u ratnim sukobima na području bivše SFRJ’ at <<http://www.nuns.rs/dosije/32/07.jsp>>.

<sup>53</sup> Some of the uncooperative media outlets and associations include the daily *Vecernje Novosti*, RTS, and the Association of Serbian Journalists (UNS). Information according to Bruno Vekarić, spokesperson of the OWCP, available at ‘Uloga medija i novinara u ratnim sukobima na području bivše SFRJ’ at <<http://www.nuns.rs/dosije/32/07.jsp>>.

<sup>54</sup> At this round-table, the Director of the Sarajevo Media Center, Boro Kontić, said, in relation to the silence about the role of the media in the wars in the former Yugoslavia, that journalists who refuse to admit their guilt are not loyal to their profession, but rather to the environment in which they live. Thus, any admission of guilt would be regarded as a betrayal of that environment and that society.



conducted in April 2009; according to this poll 55 percent of Serbian citizens believe that during the 90s the Serbian media were not objective, and of those, 32 percent believe that they spread lies, and thus incited hatred and war. Two thirds of Serbian citizens believe that journalists who participated in war-mongering should be punished; 17% think that they should be tried in court, 29% think they should be banned from the profession, and 30% think they should be banned from any public appearance.<sup>55</sup>

### Section 3

#### A. Rhetorical analysis – methods and data

Based on the review of pertinent literature and media monitoring reports, I decided to conduct my analysis by investigating the following research questions: 1) what are the main characteristics of the print media reporting about the *Scorpions* trial? and 2) what kind of national ideologies are produced and reproduced in the discourse?

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<sup>55</sup> See Strategic Marketing Research, Stavovi prema ratnim zlocinima, Haskom Tribunalu I domacem pravosudju za ratne zlocine [Attitudes toward war crimes, the Hague Tribunal and local justice system for war crimes], April 2009, available at: <[http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosuu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125](http://bgcentar.org.rs/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=358:stavovi-prema-ratnim-zloinima-hakom-tribunalu-i-domaem-pravosuu-za-ratne-zloine-&catid=125)>, accessed on 12. April 2010.

As data I used reports from the leading Serbian daily newspapers and weekly magazines:<sup>56</sup> *Politika*, *Blic*, *Danas*, *Press*, *Vecernje Novosti*, *Kurir*, *Vreme*, and *Evropa*, from November 2005 to April 2007. I analyzed the full archive available on the print media coverage, a total of 194<sup>57</sup> articles, most of them daily reports about the trial proceedings, as well as a few opinion pieces in weekly magazines.<sup>58</sup> I chose rhetorical analysis as a particularly suitable method for investigating the nature of public discourse (Condit 1987, Gronbeck 1998, Hauser 1999) and the relationship between rhetoric and national ideologies (McGee 1980). My choice to analyze print media was guided by my interest in finding out what kind of ideologies about victims and villains, heroes and criminals, were present in the almost verbatim accounts of the defense of the accused that were reported in the press. Further, I

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56 It is difficult to provide exact information about media outlets in Serbia, as there is no official register available, and the numbers provided in different reports vary significantly. For example, according to the OSCE report, Media Freedom in Serbia in 2008, Belgrade 2009, there are 439 media outlets – 97 newspapers, 205 radio stations and 137 TV stations. According to the IREX report, Media Sustainability Index, 2009, there are 149 print media outlets, which includes 19 dailies, 28 weeklies, 14 bi-weeklies, 69 monthlies and 19 others. There is a general consensus about the state of the media system in Serbia – ‘it is characterised by a belated and incomplete process of transition, an accelerated pace of commercialisation in a cash-strapped and unregulated market, a drawn-out transformation of ownership, weaknesses in legal regulations and law-enforcement institutions, the modest financial power of the media, a low level of professionalism and a large number of attacks on journalists. In a variety of ways, these all have had an impact on the manner in which the media carries out its important social functions.’ Available at <[http://www.irex.rs/attachments/117\\_1%20-%20Serbia%20MSI%202009%20report.pdf](http://www.irex.rs/attachments/117_1%20-%20Serbia%20MSI%202009%20report.pdf)>, accessed 1. June 2010.

57 The complete archive is available at <<http://www.arhiv.rs/>>.

58 I decided to include magazine articles because they are part of the complete archive, and because they had editorial content.

chose to focus on print media because it provided more consistent and detailed coverage of the trial.<sup>59</sup>

In investigating the research questions I looked for recurring themes and patterns, and coded the texts in several stages. First, I divided the texts into three categories: articles that are based largely on quotes, articles that combine quotes with commentary, and articles that offer extensive commentary and few quotes.

As the first category contained the most articles – 191, while the other two categories had only 2 and 1 respectively – I decided to focus on the former. In these articles, I first looked for representation and voice, examining how much space is given to the accused, their supporters and their lawyers, and to the victims’ families, their representatives, the prosecution and the judges,<sup>60</sup> respectively. Through dividing the texts into three categories – those which gave more space to the accused, those which gave more space to the others, and those which were short factual reports about the beginning, continuation or ending of the trial – I established that there were 115 articles in the first category, 51 articles in the second, and 28 in the third.

I then used open coding to identify concepts such as: historical references, references to truth and deceit, honor and shame, military and macho behavior, punishing disobedience and ‘unmanly’ behavior, the notion of ‘just following orders,’ crime as revenge, atrocities against Serb victims, humanitarian achievements, and heroic and patriotic deeds.

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<sup>59</sup> According to information from the OWCP, there was more mention of their work in the print media than in other forms of media outlets. See Zastupljenost Tužilaštva za ratne zločine u medijima u Srbiji, at <[http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html\\_trz/POCETNA/ZASTUPLJENOST\\_LAT.PDF](http://www.tuzilastvorz.org.rs/html_trz/POCETNA/ZASTUPLJENOST_LAT.PDF)>.

<sup>60</sup> The prosecution is rarely mentioned and is cited only infrequently. For example, the Prosecutor, the deputy Prosecutor, and the OWCP spokesperson are cited only at the end of the trial, on the day of the closing argument, and immediately following the verdict.

I organized these concepts and further coded the texts in terms of broad themes: a) heroes and patriots, b) professional military standards and behavior, c) betrayal and traitors, d) Serb victimage and historical victimage, e) the suffering of the victims in Trnovo.

I inquired about the functions of these thematic narratives, and what they accomplish in terms of my research questions. I asked what kind of national ideologies they express and support. This round of coding reflected how the thematic narrative elements functioned to emphasize the patriotism of the accused, their respect for and adherence to military standards, as well as Serbian victimage, while ambiguity emerged in relation to the victimage narratives of the victims' families, and the guilt of the accused.

### **B. Space, voice and silence**

In the articles analyzed, voice is given predominantly to the accused.<sup>61</sup> They are provided with ample space to present their defense, their version of events, and are cited at length. As has been noted also in media monitoring reports, the journalists do not write about the criminal activities of the accused, but mostly convey their statements, the statements of their lawyers – i.e. their defense, and ‘romanticized’ details from their war past (Susa et al. 2006). Very often quotes that bolster their image as heroes are inserted, for no obvious factual reason. Through the lengthy, verbatim quotes a positive image of the accused is created, particularly the image of the commander, Slobodan Medic. In discussing lofty notions, such as truth and deceit,

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<sup>61</sup> According to media monitoring reports, the tendency to report sensationalist news leads to providing much space and voice to people who are accused of serious crimes; in fact, this is stated as one of the most common ‘ailments’ of the Serbian print media, and the reports note with concern that this kind of practice gives rise to a ‘resurrection of hate speech’ (Milosevic 2006).

honor and shame, the accused align themselves with truth and honor, while journalists make no attempt to situate their statements in a different context, or provide a divergent perspective. There is an absence of discussion, debate or any kind of questioning of the statements of the accused about their valor and innocence, or of the issues they bring up. In fact, in most cases their shocking statements are inserted and highlighted as titles, or sub-headings, or in separate bold boxes.

It is important to note that while, at first glance, this may seem just another example of lazy reporting on the part of the journalists, and a mere sensationalist-driven editorial policy, it would be a mistake to assume that these ‘transcript-articles’ don’t reflect the attitudes of the journalists, and editors themselves, as well as the culture and society they belong to. The inclusion and/or exclusion of facts, voices, and perspectives play a key role in shaping media reports, and thus the public’s perception of the trial, its key players and issues. This lack of investigative and reflexive journalism means that the ‘facts of the case’ are spoken by the accused, and it is their version, or rather their versions, that are most prominent. In giving voice to the accused in such an uncensored and superfluous manner, the press in this case allowed for the reproduction of extremist national ideologies, wherein participating in the war and even committing war crimes is considered commendable patriotism.

In comparison, the reporting on the testimony of the victims’ family members is quite short. As Jasmina Tesanovic (2009) poignantly notes in her book, *Design of a crime*, written from the perspective of the audience at the *Scorpions* trial, ‘the dead are mute, their killers are the wordiest.’ Tesanovic describes the callous and boisterous behavior of the accused and their families, in sharp contrast to the silent, shocked, almost demure, demeanor of the victims’ families and their supporters. Such descriptions are completely absent from the journalistic accounts and the articles analyzed; only in a few rare cases the behavior of the victims’ families is mentioned, and is described as emotional, as well as critical of the trial process and the Serbian state itself.

The victims' families' voices are reported only on certain days, such as when they were testifying in court; in contrast, the accused are quoted in almost every article about the trial. It cannot be said that there is complete silence about the suffering of the victims' families, as the journalists report their grief, and at times also their anger and despair. However, ambiguity is often present, through a strategy that mixes the quotes of the victims' families with quotes of the accused or the defense lawyers. These quotes balance the criticism of the victims' families regarding the accused, the process and the Serbian state, with quotes that emphasize Serbian victimage and nationalistic ideologies of patriotism and sacrifice. The strategy – not denying the victims of the Others, but emphasizing that there were significant victims also on the Serbian side – is more socially acceptable, and seems more objective, than outright denial. However, it does not constitute an admittance of guilt or a serious attempt at empathy<sup>62</sup> or conveying the suffering of the victims' families.

As with the representations of the victims' families, when it comes to representing the legal counsels, the representative of the victims' families, Natasa Kandic, while quoted relatively often, is more frequently the subject of accusations regarding her patriotism. The negative image of Kandic that is thereby created is in line with dominant nationalistic ideologies, according to which those investigating crimes committed by Serbs are considered traitors, and their work is criticized, obstructed and disregarded. It is also important to consider that Natasa Kandic represents not only herself and her organization, the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC), but stands for an entire community

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<sup>62</sup> As Vekaric puts it, once killing someone just because he has a different religion or nationality is justified, 'once it is explained as being the consequences of those Others doing the same, we are in an offside. Let's see what we as a society can do to prevent it, so that our society can be an example to everyone in terms of punishing criminals who endangered the basic values of our civilization, and then others can do it as well' (Šterić 2008)

of people and organizations that work to bring those who committed war crimes to justice. In demonizing Kandic, the whole community and its particular way of thinking and working is framed as ‘unpatriotic,’ deceitful and biased.

The prosecution is not given much space and representation; the opinions and statements of the prosecutor and his staff are reported only on a few occasions, namely related to closing arguments, reactions to the verdict and notices of appeal. The presiding judge, Gordana Bozilovic-Petrovic, is quoted sporadically, but most of the articles that concern the verdict cite her at length, as well as subsequent articles that report criticism of the trial and her defense of the verdict.

However, as it is important to note what is said, it is equally important to pay attention to what is not being said. Huckin’s (2002) notion of ‘significant silences’ or ‘manipulative silences’ is helpful here, as it is a common feature of news discourse (Reese and Buckalew 1995) and other forms of public discourse (Van Dijk 1986), and refers to the fact that public issues are framed by mentioning certain relevant topics and subtopics, while ignoring others; these silences also deliberately conceal information that is pertinent to the topic (Huckin 2002). The defining characteristics of such silences are intentionality and advantage – certain subjects are intentionally omitted in a way that is advantageous to the writer/speaker.

In keeping with national ideologies about the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the media ignore topics and information that contradict the dominant version of events, and that carry negative implications for the Serbs. In the print media coverage of the Scorpions trial there is silence about stories that would contribute to a better understanding of the causes, consequences and responsibilities in the former Yugoslav conflicts, as well as a focus on the victims, and not the perpetrators. There is no coverage of the significant events and issues related to this case, such as the more recent history of the Scorpions, and other similar units. There is almost no mention of the criminal activities of the unit, or its members.

In fact, their crime is rarely named precisely a war crime,<sup>63</sup> and is often referred to as the ‘video crime.’<sup>64</sup>

Further, silences are pronounced in relation to the general context of violence committed against other Bosnian Muslims, as in Srebrenica. The analysis shows that in this case the print media tended to downplay stories about the suffering and victimization of the Bosnian Muslims, often ‘mixing’ their narratives with ‘responses’ about Serb suffering.

This reveals a general problem related to print media coverage of the *Scorpions* trial – namely, the articles, for the most part, simply reproduce the rhetoric of the accused, the *Scorpions*, reporting their statements as facts, without providing context, counter-arguments, divergent perspectives and opinions, doing investigative work or debating issues. And while at first glance one can get the impression that the trial coverage is bland, factual, and objective, due to an absence of overt discussion, debate and analysis, the analysis below reveals that this style of reporting, in its supposed simplicity of verbatim reports and lengthy quotes from the accused, reproduces dominant national, or rather nationalistic ideologies.

The journalists quote the accused as authoritative sources on the events in question, and give voice to their memories and stories, which support the general Serbian history of collective national suffering and redemption. In this way, the print media texts establish a coherent argument, which runs counter to that of the ‘attackers,’ i.e.

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<sup>63</sup> The video is characterized only once, as ‘monstrous’ in (Radosavljević 2006, p. 20)

<sup>64</sup> For example, see (Čolak 2008, p. 7)

The experts are surprised that the appeals of the members of the *Scorpions* unit were approved, and that their sentences were reduced, for the ‘video crime’ in Trnovo, in July 1995, which was publicized a few years ago during the trial of former SRJ president Slobodan Milosevic at the Hague Tribunal, and which shocked the world.



the victims' families and their representatives, about the 'true' victims in the events and the conflicts. The accused appear as scapegoats and patriots, rather than perpetrators. I posit that this can be understood as a reaction to a perceived threat, coming from different Others, to the dominant Serbian national ideologies – ideologies which are constitutive of the Serbian identity, and which the journalists subscribe to. Thus, the dominant national ideologies of Serbia's victimage are not allowed to be contested through evidence that speaks to the contrary.

### C. Dominant themes

The dominant themes in the articles analyzed relate to patriotism, military culture, manly behavior, nationalism, loyalty to country and commander, as well as the notions of treason, betrayal and dishonor.<sup>65</sup>

#### *a. Heroes and patriots*

The texts in this category emphasize the accused as heroes and patriots, and are characterized by references to the valor and positive achievements of the accused in war, in defending their country and fellow Serbs, as well as Muslims. The journalists

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<sup>65</sup> These characteristics are congruent with the findings in several reports analyzing Serbian print media in general. According to reports from NUNS, the Independent Serbian Journalists Association, print media have a preference for accentuating the shocking, particularly in titles, and this very often 'turns into a competition in vulgarity.' They consciously or unconsciously transmit literally and without any criteria the words of those they write about, which are very often 'below the minimum level of decency.' Editors seem to employ no selection process, adhering to the maxim that they are simply transmitting the words of others, and thus show no regard for cultural and professional standards. In such a way, the vocabulary and statements that are reported become in fact standards for the print media (Radulovic 2005).

quote the accused stating that they did not participate in the war because of material gain, but because of a strong feeling of love and duty toward their country, and a calling to defend it. The involvement of the unit in the war is thus presented as defense, and their actions as defensive and patriotic.

This theme is exemplified most vividly in the direct quoting of the commander of the Scorpions, Slobodan Medic, referred to as Boca,<sup>66</sup> and in quotes of other accused and certain witnesses about his character. He is given much space to describe himself as patriotic, and the journalistic choice to quote entire passages where he does so is quite revealing, as well as the word selection. In an illustrative article<sup>67</sup> from the beginning of the trial, which reports on Slobodan Medic's testimony and his denial of the accusation, the journalist quotes Medic profusely; the article is mostly in the first person singular or plural, and often, due to the absence of proper punctuation, the words of the journalist and the words of the accused in court overlap and mix, as in the following excerpt:

In April 1995, we go to Velika Kladusa, told Medic, where we were substituting for the RSK units and holding a part of the territory, and we received orders from the commander of the Vukovar corps general Dusan Loncar. Medic explains that they stayed 15 days in Kladusa and that they left after a certain number of people from the unit got sick because they received a tank with infected water. That's when they returned to Djeletovci, told Medic, and in June or July they receive the message that 'Republika Srpska and its people are in danger.' (Roknić 2005, naslovna i p.4)

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<sup>66</sup> The accused are frequently cited with their nicknames, which adds a sort of familiarity.

<sup>67</sup> In this section I provide representative examples, to illustrate the conclusions I have reached analyzing the entire corpus. Therefore, unless otherwise specified, the representative examples reflect the patterns found in the entire corpus, and not just a single article.

In the last sentence the journalist uses the historical present tense, saying ‘they receive the message,’ a tense that is used most often in historical texts;<sup>68</sup> this confers a sense of veracity and factual precision to the statements of the accused. The journalist continues then to cite the commander:

I am first a Serb, and then everything else – emphasizes Medic, and adds that then there was a meeting held in Erdut, where they received the order to go to Trnovo, through Pale and Jahorina.

The quote is irrelevant to the summary of events, and serves only to highlight the ‘patriotic’ image of the accused.

The patriotic image is not limited to the commander, since the others among the accused are also quoted praising themselves and their unit. In the article (Čarnić 2006) the journalist quotes Petrasevic:

He added that he regrets that the Scorpions are mentioned in public only for the crime in Trnovo and Podujevo, while it is forgotten how many lives that unit saved.

In another article, (E.R. 2006), a witness, Radoslav Olujic, is quoted as saying:

- The ‘Scorpions’ are neither a criminal group, nor a paramilitary formation – he said, while as a special forces soldier he held his hand behind his back all the time.
- Someone explain to me what is military and what is paramilitary. We are not mercenaries, and we weren’t there for material gain. We are the Serbian army and patriots. (E.R. 2006)

The image of the ‘Scorpions’ as patriots, loving their country and defending the Serbian people, is reinforced through such quotes.

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<sup>68</sup> It is a device most appropriate for storytelling, or describing events from the past as though they were taking place at the time of the telling (Magner 2003).

*b. Professional military standards and behavior*

The texts in this category draw attention to the professionalism of the accused as soldiers, and also to their justifications of the crime as an adherence to military code and conduct. Slobodan Medic is characterized as a great commander, through quotes that emphasize his military and leadership skills, and personal honor and strength, as in this example:

Speaking about his military skills, Medic said that ‘generals were kissing his hand like the patriarch’s,’ but that he probably inherited his military skill from his ancestors. (Roknić 2005, naslovna i p.4)

Journalists profusely quote the commander speaking about himself with praise, as well as other testimonies about his character, as in the following representative example:

The witness Vucenovic says that Slobodan Medic was a ‘real commander,’ that ‘when there were battles, he went first with his men’ to the front line, and that everyone in the unit ‘knew who gives orders, and who obeys.’ (Roknić 2006 p. 7)

The same journalist continues to cite positive characterizations of the commander, in an article the following day:

[Manojlovic] said that Slobodan Medic was a good and honest man, an extraordinary commander, who referred to the commander of the Corps about developments in his area of responsibility. (Roknić 2006 p. 7)

On the following day, the journalist quotes yet another witness and his praise:

Opacic said that the commander was ‘alpha and omega’ when it came to orders, and that he ‘had to be asked for everything,’ that he was very brave and that he even rescued the body of a fallen fellow soldier from a mine-field. (Roknić 2006 p. 7)

The notion of professional military behavior is carried over into a justification for the crime committed, as in an article which carries Petrusevic’s statement as the title: ‘Obey, then complain!’ The text clarifies:

- I had to do it. Everyone knows what orders are. In war we say: Obey, then complain – answered Petrasevic. (Čarnić 2006)

The emphasis on military code and discipline is in line also with the defense of several of the accused, who justify murdering and executing the six Bosnian Muslims as ‘just following orders.’ In the following example, the journalist also quotes Pero Petrasevic, the only one who repented and admitted his guilt, as saying:

- I am not proud that I participated in the execution the way I did. Of course I repent, but it is the soldier’s fate to fulfill, without questioning, all orders. (Adžić 2005)

In *Kurir* the journalist relays Petrasevic’s statement as:

In the end he said that he repents, but that a soldier’s fate is to kill without questioning. (Katić 2005)

The choice to report such statements, verbatim, is significant, for it not only provides a positive ‘spin’ on the execution and serves to exculpate the accused, but is also linked to the wider debate about war crimes and responsibility. The notion that the ‘Scorpions’ on trial were ‘simply following orders’ evokes powerfully the World War II Nazi atrocities, yet it is also a clear reference to discipline, moral order and military prowess, and thus reproduces dominant national ideologies about the bravery and valor of Serbian soldiers.

In this theme, I also included texts that dealt with punishment, as a way of enforcing ‘proper’ military behavior, and noted that in the statements of the accused military code was often equated with manly behavior. For example, in an article in *Politika* (Čarnić 2005, p. 11) there is an entire sub-section (titled ‘when the commander beats his soldiers’) dedicated to the manner in which Slobodan Medic kept discipline in his unit and how he punished soldiers who didn’t obey his orders. In these accounts the accused are portrayed as strong and ‘real’ men, and describe a ‘manly’ culture, where those who don’t obey orders are perceived as weak, feminine and are

ridiculed. For example, in all the newspapers from 23.12.05, we read that when members of the unit saw that Aleksandar Medic was the only one not cleaning his rifle after the execution, we read that he was taunted in ‘colorful’ and inappropriate language, reported verbatim in all the articles:

After that [Momic] came to me and said: ‘You pu...! You have no balls! Why didn’t you shoot and fulfill the order?’ (Radosavljević 2005, p. 12)

Discussions about military and manly standards are particularly present in articles from the days when the judge, as a truth-finding technique, decided to have the accused confront each other in court, since they all had different versions of the events:

- You are hiding behind hideous lies! Once I used to respect you and be proud that you were my commander. You claim that for ten years you didn’t know that there was a tape of the execution, and you expect someone to believe you – Petrasevic boldly answered.
- The court will decide who is guilty and if after this fabrication you’ll be going home. A real Obilic doesn’t have the right to point the finger at his commander – Medic tried to give him a lesson in morals.
- It’s obvious I’m not Obilic, and you should be ashamed. If you were a real commander, I would stand behind you. But you’re not. You allowed your most loyal men to now sit in jail, with this kind of label. (N.J. 2006)

This text exemplifies the frequent lessons about what is ‘proper’ military and manly behavior, and who conforms to it and who doesn’t. Slobodan Medic is quoted emphasizing loyalty to the commander and truth as characteristics of a good soldier. The mention of epic Serbian heroes and personalities, from the period of the famous Kosovo battle, such as Obilic and Brankovic, situates the accused within a broader context of Serbian history. The accused use these historical metaphors to ‘prove’ their military and personal honor, valor, worth and greatness. Comparing himself to Obilic, one of the legendary commanders from the Kosovo battle, who is reputed to have killed the Ottoman Sultan, the commander Slobodan Medic is conferring upon

himself a kind of ‘honorary’ military and noble title. This ‘memorable’ quote was reported in all the articles from that day, as was the word choice of Slobodan Medic, to describe the event as an ‘unarticulated fuck-up.’<sup>69</sup> It can be argued that the word choice in this case reflects not only the character of the accused, but by reporting it, and even highlighting it, it reflects the low professional standards of the journalists, and testifies to their (dis)regard for the victims.

In *Blic*, the same day, the journalist chose to include yet another of Medic’s ‘catchy’ phrases:

- For me that’s an incident I wasn’t able to control. I was Obilic and not Brankovic. I loved pu..., rifle and country. (N.J. 2006)

Such quotes are inserted for their sensationalistic value; they present the commander as a real, ‘macho’ man, and a patriot. They do not paint a negative, but rather a positive portrayal of the man who was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the murder of the six Bosnian Muslims.

### *c. Betrayal and traitors*

In the above example, Slobodan Medic is cited mentioning Brankovic, another epic character from the Serbian past, considered to be the biggest traitor of the Serbian people, linked with the Kosovo battle and associated in Serbian national symbolism with betrayal. In the texts analyzed the notion of betrayal is present

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<sup>69</sup> Throughout the articles analyzed, the murder of the six Bosnian Muslims is most frequently referred to, either in the text of the journalists or through direct quotes of the accused as: execution, killing, an incident, an unrelated incident, termination, deprivation of life, a revolt, a brutal murder, a fuck-up, and, as quoted here, ‘an unarticulated fuck-up’- the awkwardness of phrase in the original is here preserved in English.

particularly in reports that mention the role of Natasa Kandic, the representative of the victims' families, in the trial. Kandic's accusations against the Serbian state are cited frequently, but they are counter-balanced with quotes that accuse her of being a anti-Serb and a traitor, coming mostly from the defense lawyers, especially from Zoran Levajac, the defense counsel for Pero Petrasevic and Aleksandar Vukov. The accusations leveled against her for 'un-patriotic' behavior are not pertinent for the trial proceedings, and are included in the coverage in order to cater to a certain part of the Serbian population. Kandic is one of the most prominent public figures in Serbia, responsible for improving cooperation with the ICTY, working tirelessly on investigating war crimes, and bringing those who committed them to justice. However, across a large segment of the Serbian population, i.e. those who refuse to acknowledge Serbia's role in committing war crimes, she inspires strong negative emotions and much criticism. One of the criticisms is that she deals and exposes only crimes perpetrated by Serbs against members of other ethnic groups, but that she disregards crimes committed against Serbs. She is often called a 'traitor' for her 'anti-Serb' activities and role in exposing Serbs who committed war crimes.

For example, in a representative article from *Glas Javnosti*, the journalist quotes the former deputy Minister of Police of Republika Srpska, Tomislav Kovac, attacking Natasa Kandic, together with the other representative of the victims' families, Dragoljub Todorovic:

The president of the judicial council Gordana Bozilovic-Petrovic warned and reprimanded the witness several times, because he was arguing with the representatives of the victims' families, Natasa Kandic and Dragoljub Todorovic, for their questions as to whether Serbia sent its police to help RS.

- To your regret they didn't. We had no help from Slobodan Milosevic – said Kovac, while at one point he asked Kandic 'how much money she got to lobby against Serbia.' (Svedocio bivsi zamenik ministra policije RS, 2006).



The strategy of representing Kandic in a negative light is in line with nationalistic ideologies regarding who and what is patriotic.<sup>70</sup> According to such ideologies, those who speak up for non-Serb victims of the former Yugoslav conflicts are considered traitors. The uneasiness that exists in Serbian society when it comes to speaking about non-Serb victims is reflected also in the following dominant theme.

*d. Serb victimage and historical victimage*

This theme is exemplified through references to atrocities committed against Serbs, and the justification that some of the Scorpions executed the six victims as revenge for such atrocities. At the trial, the commander Slobodan Medic testified that he had no knowledge of the event, but said that he understood it as a ‘natural’ thing, as his soldiers had witnessed atrocities against women and children in particular and were

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<sup>70</sup> The negative portrayal of Natasa Kandic continued in the print media even after the trial concluded, particularly in the articles related to the judge in the *Scorpions* case, Gordana Bozilovic-Petrovic, who was removed from the WCC after delivering the verdict. The judge later sued Natasa Kandic for slander (Zarić 2008). As the judge pointed the finger of blame on Natasa Kandic, the press used this as an opportunity to amplify the stereotype of Kandic as anti-Serb. For example, in an article from *Vecernje Novosti*, in a highlighted box with bold letters, titled ‘not all victims are the same,’ the journalist writes:

Natasa Kandic and the lawyer of the Humanitarian Law Center, Dragoljub Todorovic, represented the interests of the victims’ families in all war crimes trials, of which there have been around ten in the Belgrade court. Except in one.

That is the trial against Anton Lekaj, member of the KLA, who was convicted to 13 years in prison for war crimes against nine Roma and one Serb. The court declared that Lekaj and Arben Skupi, members of the so-called KLA in the Dukagin zone, which was under the direct command of Ramush Haradinaj, raped the minor Sofija Tafaj, while they beat, sexually harassed, tortured, and burned with cigarettes the rest, and forced them to drink urine. Unofficially, Todorovic defended the accused Lekaj in the investigation phase of this trial. (Radosavljević 2007)

thus emotional and not subject to control. Through direct and lengthy quoting of the statements of the accused, the journalists paid particular attention to the parts of his testimony that referred to these alleged atrocities:

I couldn't control the emotions of my men when they see a Serbian head chopped off or a pregnant woman murdered. They had weapons, and weapons and women are very hard to control. (Čarnić 2006, p. 10)

In *Blic*, Medic's statement is reported as such:

I am no one's father, and members of the unit had a conscience. I only know that it's hard when a man sees an entire Serbian family impaled on stakes, with their heads wide open. It's hard to control people after such scenes. I'm not an AWACS (airborne warning and control system). And it's known that weapons and women are hard to control. (Jovanović 2005, p. 11)

The choice to cite such statements, without contextualizing them, shifts the focus from the crimes that the accused committed to the crimes that 'play well' in the public, as they are part of national ideologies about Serbian victimage.<sup>71</sup> Further, through references such as impalement, it invokes not just present victimage, but historical victimage (Zdravkovic-Zonta 2009); impalement is a particularly salient image of Serbian historical victimage, at the hands of Muslims, which harks back to the time when the region was part of the Ottoman Empire, and when Christians and Muslims belonged to different social strata. It is one of the most powerful, and most used references, which instantly paints a negative image of the Muslim Other, and transcends time, equating the Muslims of today's Bosnia with Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, which was a common demonizing technique used in Serbian public discourse throughout the 1990s.

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<sup>71</sup> As many have noted, including the President of the Independent Journalists Association of Serbia, Nadežda Gaće, 'people generally do not want to be reminded of bad things' (Gaće 2006).

The reference to chopped off heads is another powerful and emotionally-charged image, going back to medieval times as well. Both during and after the war, Serbian media frequently wrote about the alleged practice of Bosnian soldiers and foreign Islamic fighters of chopping the heads off of Serbian soldiers and civilians. Such acts were often cited as prime examples of brutal and inhumane behavior, as well as a kind of primordial hatred that Muslims have for Christians.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, several of the accused testified that the six Bosnian Muslims who were executed were initially supposed to be exchanged for Serbian prisoners, but that the exchange failed because the Serbian soldiers were killed. The journalists focused on these testimonies, often highlighting the murder of the Serb soldiers:

[Branislav] Medic says that on that occasion he also took bread for the army. Returning to the front line he found out from officers of the RS that Serbian prisoners were massacred and that there would be no exchange. (Čarnić 2006, p. 10)

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<sup>72</sup> An excellent example is the article entitled '27 Serbian heads – gifts for Alija' (Došović 2003) at <<http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.69.html:151863-ALIJI-NA-DAR---27-SRPSKIH-GLAVA>>, accessed 26. September 2010., which recounts how mujahedin fighters 'left in their wake bloody footprints and crimes that mankind had never seen before: chopped off heads of Serbian soldiers, which they took photos with, and then sent them, together with video material and photos to their superiors.'

Another, even more recent example, is (Lakić 2008), <<http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Drustvo/Srpska-ratna-zastava-kupljena-u-Zagrebu.lt.html>>, accessed 26. September 2010. In the article, the 'El Mujahed' section of the BiH Army is mentioned as being famous for chopping off Serbian soldiers' heads, and recording it on videotape and in photos. The article refers to the well-known photos of Mujahedin fighters posing for the camera with a head, and it includes one such photo. It is important to note that these are only two of many examples, as reporting such as this was quite common during the war, but also afterward.

Also, there are many videos and other visual material available on, for example, YouTube related to this topic.

While here the journalist quotes the witness, Branislav Medic, in *Blic*, the testimony is simply summarized:

According to Medic's statements, the Srebrenica Muslims were supposed to be exchanged for captured Serbs. Since the 'Scorpions' heard that the Serbian prisoners were killed and massacred, they killed the six Srebrenica Muslims. (N.J. 2006, p. 13)

Through repetition of synonyms – killed and massacred, and the use of hyperbole – for massacred, the journalist emphasizes Serbian victimage, and indirectly provides a context wherein the murder of the six Bosnian Muslims is understandable.

The juxtaposition of atrocities committed by Serbs with those committed against Serbs is frequently present in the articles analyzed, as in the representative example from *Vecernje Novosti*, where in a box, highlighted and in bold, the words of the lawyer Zoran Levajac are emphasized, under the heading 'piety of the defense counsel':

The defense counsel for Pero Petrusevic and Aleksandar Vukov, lawyer Zoran Levajac, reacted after the testimony of Osman Salkic. He objected to the judge for allowing witnesses to talk at length, and added:

- I have piety for the victims from Srebrenica, but also for those in Kravice and Bogošće.<sup>73</sup>  
(E.R. 2006)

The choice to include the statement, and highlight it, demonstrates the intent to counter-balance the witness' statements about Serbia's guilt, with statements that go against it and along with the dominant national ideology, which emphasizes Serbian victimage. It is also worth noting that the journalist provides no context, information or clarification about the two references, leaving the reader to guess that gruesome massacres of Serbs occurred in these two places.

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<sup>73</sup> I was not able to find information about the events in this village that the lawyer Levajac is referring to.

As in this example, throughout the articles analyzed, the statements of the accused and their representatives are reported as facts, and there is no attempt on the part of the journalists to enter into the debate about truth and deceit, and contribute to it, through investigative reporting and trying to uncover the facts of the case. And while it can be argued that the print media outlets allowed for diverse truths to be heard, and that giving voice to these different truths and memories can be commendable, the privileging of truths and memories of one side over that of the other is detrimental to the reconciliation process. As Payam Akhavam (1998, p. 760) explains:

Reconciliation requires a shared truth – a moral or interpretive account that appeals to a common bond of humanity transcending ethnic affinity. To achieve this, it is not necessary or desirable to provide an exhaustive or definitive official historical record.

One of the basic functions of war crimes trials should be truth-telling (Akhavam 1998, p. 761) and their media coverage should be in accordance with this. However, according to Impunity Watch, the absence of a properly sourced, widely communicated and publicly accepted truth about what happened in the 1990s emerges as the root of Serbia's difficulties in combating impunity.<sup>74</sup> And as Slavenka Drakulic (2008) writes, 'what people in Belgrade and in Zagreb and in Sarajevo as well as in Pristina need most is truth. We know that without truth there is no justice, but in the case of these wars, without justice there is no truth.'

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<sup>74</sup> See Dealing with impunity in Serbia: options and obstacles, Impunity Watch, July 2009, available at <<http://citycellar.com/balkanwitness/Impunity-Serbia.htm>>, accessed 28. September 2010.

*e. Suffering of the victims in Trnovo*

The texts in this category encompass articles that give voice to the victims' families and their grief. Their testimonies at trial are reported in much less detail and length<sup>75</sup> compared to the testimonies of the accused, and are often briefly summarized, sprinkled with some direct quotes and some descriptions of the emotional state of those testifying:

When Hana Fejzic looked at the photo of her son Safet, whom the 'Scorpions' are taking out of the truck, she started crying and covered her face. (...) Muhic's testimony was interrupted at one point because the girl got very emotional and excited when she was shown the photo of her brother in the truck, immediately before the execution. (...) No less painful and moving was the testimony of Nura Alispahic, the mother of Azmir Alispahic. (...) Safeta Muhic turned toward the accused and looked at each one of them.

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<sup>75</sup> For example, in the article (Čarnić 2005), there is an aside, which gives snippets of the victims' families' statements. The length of this aside is quite short, particularly as the length of the article about the trial statements, where only the voice of the accused is heard, is quite long. In this aside, two of the victims' relatives are quoted, explaining their reactions and grief when they saw the tape aired at the ICTY, and therein found out the fate of their loved ones, which had until then been unknown. It also quotes a woman from the Organization of the women from Srebrenica, who was present at the trial, about the loss of her entire family. Further, this is one of the rare articles that mentions through quoting the victims' families the atmosphere inside the courtroom:

This girl claims that she is shocked with Slobodan Medic's defense of denying guilt. She is sure that the accused committed the crime, because, as she says, everything can be seen on the tape. - I am stunned by the behavior of the audience in the courtroom, the relatives of the accused. While Medic is talking, they are laughing. I can't hear anything from their noise, and the security doesn't reprimand them. This, after all, is not a circus – adds Sajma.

The presence of this short statement about the trial atmosphere is a rarity, as there is almost a complete absence of that kind of reporting.

- I look at them, but I don't know whether they are human. I always dreamed of asking them 'Why?' They were only kids – said Muhic and sighed. (Jovanović 2006)

The quotes from the victim's families are often situated between quotes from the accused, or followed by what could be considered rebuttals or responses; such articles typically begin and end not with the words of those who testified about the last time they saw their loved ones, but those that were accused of their execution. For example, in a representative article in *Politika*, one of the witnesses is quoted:

- This court could wash off Serbia's shame. If it hadn't been for Serbia, there wouldn't have been war in Bosnia, said the witness. (Čarnić 2006, p. 1, 12)

The journalist follows this statement with a quote from the accused Petrusevic:

- I participated in the execution. I did it following orders. I wasn't a coward, but an order is an order. I didn't feel comfortable. If we made a mistake, don't blame all of Serbia. (Čarnić 2006, p. 1, 12)

It can even be said that the journalist is, in a way, using the quotes of the accused as his own rebuttal to the words of the Bosnian witnesses and their criticism or accusations against Serbia.

The same article quotes Aleksandar Medic, who asked the witness:

...Does he know who the commander was during the attack on Kravice,<sup>76</sup> when almost an entire Serbian village was killed? (Čarnić 2006, p. 1, 12)

The words of the witness, describing his last meeting with his relative, and his accusations against Serbia, are mixed with ‘responses’ by the accused, and their statements about military code of conduct, and atrocities against Serbs; the journalist fails to provide either context or explanation as to what the defendants are referring to.

This analysis demonstrates neglect of the victims’ families, and most importantly, the victims themselves, in the reporting of this war crimes trial. In fact, the six Bosnian Muslims are infrequently named and mentioned; they are referred to inter-changeably as Muslims, Bosniaks, prisoners, civilians, prisoners of war, Srebrenica Muslims, and in the ‘lingo’ of the ‘Scorpions’ even ‘packages.’ This finding conforms to the general tendency of the Serbian media, observed by, amongst others, Impunity Watch, to display a lack of empathy with victims, and indeed disinterest in their stories, and no attempt at uncovering the truth about certain important and traumatic events and informing the

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<sup>76</sup> Kravice is a village in Bosnia, close to Bratunac and Srebrenica. According to the information given on the website of the Republika Srpska, <<http://www.republikasrpska.org/biblioteka/otadzbinski-rat/masakr-u-kravici/>>, there were two massacres in Kravice – one in WWII, ‘when over 500 people were killed in Kravice and its vicinity, by Muslims.’ The second time was on Orthodox Christmas, January 7, 1993, when ‘the Muslim troops of the BiH army, with around 3000 soldiers, led by Naser Oric, attacked the village, which was defended by no more than 300 people. 49 people were killed, in an unequal battle, protecting around 1000 refugees from Kravice, but also the population of the surrounding villages of Šiljkovići, Ježeštica, and Banjevići. Several villages were burned to the ground, and no longer exist.’ According to the information on Wikipedia, <[http://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-el/Ĺāñāêđ\\_ó\\_Ěđāāçöè](http://sr.wikipedia.org/sr-el/Ĺāñāêđ_ó_Ěđāāçöè)>, the first massacre occurred in July 1944, when Ustasha soldiers killed 111 persons.



public.<sup>77</sup> The grief of the families and the fate of the victims appear as less important and newsworthy than the opinions and statements of the accused.

It is important to note that while the media outlets in this analysis have vastly different ideological positions in terms of internal Serbian politics, I did not find differences in reporting on this trial. All the media outlets, apart from one – the weekly magazine *Vreme* – demonstrated unity in their style of reporting, and the national ideologies they reproduced. In this case then national ideologies were stronger than political orientation, and were reproduced in unison.

The above analysis demonstrates that the print media reported the *Scorpions* trial from the perspective of the accused, and instead of focusing on the war crime they were tried for, and other crimes they committed, they represented the accused in line with nationalistic ideologies, as heroes and patriots. In one of their print media monitoring reports, NUNS journalists condemned this kind of reporting, saying that ‘editors should be conscious of the fact that it is not in the best interest of our society to systematically offer the public texts in which those accused of the most brutal murders are presented either as scapegoats who ended up in prison without their own volition, or as war heroes’ (Susa et al 2006). In fact, it should be emphasized that such an approach is detrimental not only to the journalistic profession, but also to public memory about the trial, its protagonists, the case and the broader context itself, as the ones who have been given ample space to tell their story and that of the Bosnian war are those that have been convicted of committing war crimes.

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<sup>77</sup> See Dealing with impunity in Serbia: options and obstacles, Impunity Watch, July 2009, available at <<http://citycellar.com/balkanwitness/Impunity-Serbia.htm>>, accessed 28. September 2010.

#### Section 4 – Implications for public memory in Serbia and regional reconciliation

In order for a society to fully recover, if possible, from the devastation of a conflict, it is necessary to begin the process of reconciliation, but only after first having dealt with the burden of war crimes. The war crimes trials at the ICTY, but more importantly those at the WCC in Belgrade, are important elements in dealing with this burden. The domestic war crimes trials in particular are events of national significance, as they test and bring to the fore not only the Serbian judicial system, but the political and social environment as well. They become forums, where the victims can be honored, and which allow their families the opportunity to confront those responsible, and in doing so, regain a sense of power and control. For the citizens of Serbia, these trials should provide evidence that the legal system is strong and that past atrocities are dealt with; in the hope that when the past is laid to rest, the future will be bright (Kritz 1995). Yet the *Scorpions* trial brought to the fore numerous problems related to the Serbian justice system, the prosecution of war crimes, and the generally negative attitude toward such trials in Serbian society and amongst the political elite. It also helped highlight the position that indicted war criminals hold in Serbian society.

The trial and the verdict sparked negative reactions, both internally<sup>78</sup> and in neighboring countries, and most importantly, from the victims' families. For example,

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<sup>78</sup> Vekarić, the OWCP spokesperson, also negatively evaluated the verdict, and its implications for regional reconciliation, saying:

Considering the reactions from Bosnia, the verdict will not contribute to the reconciliation process in the region. The difference is 42 years in relation to the requested sentences, and we even consider that the maximum sentences are the minimum that would satisfy the demands for justice. Ibid.

we read that when the verdict was delivered the victims' families complained and expressed deep dissatisfaction:

- I am not satisfied with this verdict, this is a shame, Serbia should be ashamed. I'm not interested how much each of them got, I am interested only in that 'paramilitary formation' – said Hana Fejzic, mother of the killed Safet.
- We came to a state that did the execution, but there is no justice. Nothing will bring back our dead, no verdict, but this is a disgrace – added her daughter Safeta. (E. P. 2007)

According to Florence Hartmann, the Scorpions case exemplified, quite vividly, the problems of domestic war crimes trials, which are held in an unfavorable political and social environment, and where judges are, for the most part, not willing to go against dominant national ideologies about the conflict in former Yugoslavia. Hartmann says that the verdict, and thus the court itself, 'contribute to a wrong public impression about the war, according to which crimes were committed by individual criminals, and not a criminal policy, which made use of the institutions of a state' (Šterić 2008). The same can be said of the print media coverage analyzed here.

One of the few journalists who critically analyzed the trial in the Serbian press was the Croatian journalist Tatjana Tagirov, who follows war crimes trials in the region, reports from Belgrade for the Croatian news agency Hina, and is a columnist for the weekly *Vreme*. She says that in general, the war crimes trials held in Serbia are of high quality, well prepared and impartial in that they are held regardless of 'whose' crimes are in question (Šterić 2008). (However, in her article in *Vreme*, titled 'Truth, but only legal' she writes about the disparity between, what she calls, 'legal truth' and 'real truth,' enumerating the various discrepancies between the verdict in the *Scorpions* case and the demonstrated and existing evidence (all of which were already mentioned above). She concludes her article by saying:

From all that's been said, we will have to be happy if on the higher level [Serbian Supreme Court] at least legal truth wins,<sup>79</sup> even though we know it's a lie that the 'Scorpions' weren't created in Serbia and that all that remains is the truth that that murdered Bosnian teenager in Trnovo 'will never f....' The tragedy of that, only one of many destroyed destinies, will not be comprehended by those who love those three things Boca does [p..., rifle and country]: after 20 years he will have them back, but the murdered Bosnian teenager will never have them, and then the State will, thanks to the legal truth, be innocent as well. (Tagirov 2007, p. 20-21)

This article aptly sums up dissatisfaction with the verdict, but it can also be applied to the coverage in the print media, which through focusing on the 'sensational' side of the trial, and by profusely quoting the accused, did not contribute to the truth-finding process, but rather reproduced rhetoric that, as Tagirov says, caters to those who agree with, defend, and even glorify those who committed the crime.

Many have argued that placing burdens that are too heavy to bear on war crimes trials can be detrimental and counter-productive (Curran 2003).<sup>80</sup> As Brants (2000, p. 215) notes, 'criminal law, by its very nature, is unable to deal with the problems of collective guilt or to recognise the suffering of collective victimhood.'<sup>81</sup> We can also

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<sup>79</sup> It did not, however; the Serbian Supreme Court overturned Aleksandar Medic's sentence and returned it to the WCC for another trial. And while it confirmed the 20 year sentence of Slobodan Medic, it reduced the sentence of Branislav Medic from 20 to 15 years.

<sup>80</sup> Grosswald Curran remarks that trials of national importance, such as war crimes trials in Serbia, are meant to define the past, create and crystallize national memory, and illuminate the foundations of the future. She suggests that it might be that such tasks place 'a burden on the law that it is not designed to bear,' and that the risk is that in the process memory will be trivialized.

<sup>81</sup> The reason for this, Brants (2000, p. 215) explains, lies in the essentially individual nature of criminal justice, its concern with perpetrators rather than victims and therefore its inability to establish the sort of truth that will allow us to confront the past in any sense that could provide recognition of those victimized by past abuses... Alone, it cannot provide an adequate reaction to the great evil of war and armed conflict, for it must ever reduce it to the small evils of individual crimes.

remember Hannah Arendt's claim that the purpose of the trial is not to deliver history lessons, but simply, and only, to render justice.

However, the media have an opportunity to facilitate the transitional justice process of confronting the truth of very complex, traumatic social and political events and calling to account those who made them possible. In order for reconciliation to take place, a collective 'enlightenment' has to take place in Serbian society, as well as others, in terms of not only the victims on the Other side, but also about the perpetrators on 'this' side. The media should play a crucial role in such a process. In the case of the print media reporting of the *Scorpions* case, they did not. Instead of 'enlightening' the public about Our perpetrators, they presented a glorified image of the accused, and did not actively participate in revealing the truth about their crime and criminal activities. In order for reconciliation to work, the record that is established in court, and in the media, has to be recognized and internalized by all parties in the process. As indicated by this analysis of print media reports, this was not the case in the *Scorpions* trial.

Such a one-sided persistence and claims of a group's collective memories may impede the reconciliation process (Bar-Tal 1998), as reconciliation can be regarded as the reconciliation of memories themselves (Muluk 2009). It can be argued that the war crimes trials, including the *Scorpions* trial, not only write histories, but they also sanction and legitimize certain memories, while silencing or delegitimizing others. The coverage of the trial ostensibly does the same – by giving voice to certain narratives it is privileging the memories and truths of some, while minimizing or subverting, even silencing, those of others.

As the analysis demonstrated, the rhetoric of the print media in covering the *Scorpions* trial strengthens national ideologies about notions such as patriotism, sacrifice, justifications for atrocities, and Our victimization narratives, while ignoring

the suffering of the victims, the injustices and atrocities committed against Them, the criminal activities of the accused, and the role of the Serbian state as an institution.

The print media demonstrated, what Schatz, Staub and Lavine (1999, p. 152) call ‘blind patriotism;’ they define it as ‘an attachment to country characterized by unquestioning positive evaluation, staunch allegiance, and intolerance of criticism.’ On the other hand, they define ‘constructive patriotism’ as an attachment to country characterized by support for questioning and criticism of current group practices that are intended to result in positive change (Schatz, Staub and Lavine 1999, p. 152). They argue that it is possible for criticism that is meant to enact change to be considered patriotism, as it is in the public service of the country, and that blind patriotism in that sense can do more harm to the country itself because it does not allow, or help, the country to improve. By subscribing to practices that exemplify ‘blind patriotism,’ the print media impeded not only the Serbian public from making progress in terms of important processes, such as putting the past behind and reconciling with its neighbors, but also deterring the Serbian state from taking responsibility and recovering from the past.<sup>82</sup> Through various reporting strategies, the print media in this case sided with the perpetrators, and chose to reproduce their rhetoric and the nationalistic ideologies that constitute it. The media transmitted the ideas of ethnic prejudice, xenophobia, intolerance and expansionism, which prompted the conflicts, and which pose a serious risk to reconciliation efforts in the region.

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<sup>82</sup> Regarding the notion of journalistic patriotism, the journalist Seki Radoncic says, ‘patriotic journalism and patriotic journalists produced a real massacre on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, not only through authoring texts, but also through transmitting the war-mongering speeches of hateful politicians’ (Jovanovic 2010).

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THE KARADŽIĆ CASE: THE ANALYSIS OF  
MEDIA REPORTING ABOUT  
RADOVAN KARADŽIĆ'S ARREST AND TRIAL

*Amer DŽIHANA & Sanela HODŽIĆ*

## Introduction

The former president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić, who had been charged by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia over war crimes committed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) from 1992-1995, was officially arrested on July 21st, 2008, after more than 10 years in hiding. This arrest has drawn a deal of great attention from both the local and international public, and was the most interesting media event in 2008 in B&H and the region (Ahmetašević and Tanner 2008). The case deserves the special attention of media analysts, because it potentially displays both the elements of transformation of media discourse in comparison to the war period, and the lingering characteristics of war time journalism. Namely, the relation of the media towards Radovan Karadžić, as a war leader of the Bosnian Serbs accused of horrible war crimes, speaks a great deal about the extent to which the media themselves potentially manage to overcome ethnically divergent interpretations of social events, generated prior and during the war in B&H. More specifically, it would be interesting to examine to what extent media from different ethnic backgrounds reported about the event in similar or divergent manners.

In different analyses (See Bugarski 1997, p. 65-68, Skopljanac 1999, Tompson 2000, p. 117, 119. Kurspahic 2003), the role of a dominant media during wars has been described in the context of propaganda machinery. The media were seen as the means by which nationalists came to power and encouraged national conflicts, as well as the propaganda tools during the wars themselves. The relations between the political elites and the media were of a nature analogous to that of master and servant. Political forces appointed the suitable management in state media who

would realize their goals. The dominant ideology in the media, according to Volčič and Erjavec (2006, 2009), was expressed through 'nationalistic/patriotic journalism,' characterized primarily by the dichotomy 'us against them' as well as through reporting unburdened by the question 'is my nation right or wrong?' (Milivojevic 1996, Curgus 1999, Cirman 2003, De la Broose 2003, quoted according to Volčič and Erjavec 2009)<sup>1</sup> Members of enemy groups were, as in other conflicts, often more or less explicitly insulted, provoked, dehumanized and marked as morally inferior (Hamelink 2008).

After wars in newly formed states, regulatory frameworks have been created in order to achieve the independence and pluralism of the media sector, as well as the transformation of the state media, whether into private media or public broadcasters. Professional standards were developed and began to be implemented by the journalist community. In such circumstances, the media have increasingly represented the plurality of views and conflicting attitudes of political and other social actors, revealing corruption and scandals, etc., especially with regard to intra-ethnic issues. However, social and regulatory developments led to the departure of media with dominant ethno-national determinants only to a limited extent. Media discourse that defines the relation towards other nations/ethnic groups still remains within a firm symbiosis with the political rhetoric of national tribunes. Sladeček and Džihana (2009) show that the other side is no longer described as 'criminal,' but is characterized as responsible for past events and contemporary political crises.

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<sup>1</sup> In other contexts, there are examples of verdicts against journalists using propaganda of hatred and hence encouraging war crimes: the verdict against the worker on Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines in Rwanda, or the verdict against the editor of *Der Stürmer*, after the Second World War. (See Hamelink 2008, p. 80) .

This research will focus on media representations of the case of Radovan Karadžić as a case that could be easily presented through a nationalistic interpretative lens, as well as dealt with in a professional journalistic manner that would promote positive steps towards facing the past and building sustainable peace in the region. The patterns of media reporting were examined through content and semantic analysis of five B&H newspapers (*Oslobodenje*, *Dnevni avaz*, *Glas Srpske*, *Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni list*) and two newspapers from Serbia and Croatia (*Večernje novosti* of Belgrade and *Večernji list* of Zagreb).

The starting hypothesis of the research was that the manner in which the Karadžić case is reported on still reflects ethno-political divisions in the country. In other words, traces of patriotic journalism can still be detected as a dominant feature of reporting on war crimes and war crime trials. However, due to regulatory and professional developments since the war, we do not expect that indicators of patriotic journalism will take the form of obvious violations of professional norms of objectivity and impartiality. Hence, the analysis is oriented toward more subtle differences in reporting practices, such as how Karadžić is named and labeled and how prominent are articles on Karadžić, as potential indicators of patriotic reporting.

The chapter will start with theoretical concepts about the ethnocentric character of news when it comes to topics that have a consensus among ethno-political elites. It will then explain the nature of politics and the relation between politics and media in B&H. Next the chapter will present the opinions of political parties on the arrest of Radovan Karadžić. The analytical and methodological framework of the research is presented in the following section. The research results based on analysis of the reporting of print media about Karadžić's arrest and trial are presented in the fourth section, while a discussion of the results and concluding remarks are presented in the last.

## Media and ethnocentrism

It has become a commonplace that news is not a neutral product, but 'a cultural artifact, a sequence of socially manufactured messages that carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society' (Eldridge 1995, p. 41). News represents the expression of journalists' routines and practices, which are at the same under the strong influence of the social framework within which they are produced. One of the important characteristics of news reporting is ethnocentrism and 'the clearest expression of ethnocentrism, in all countries, appears in war news' (Gans 2004, p. 42). This means that journalists largely depart from the journalistic values of impartiality and balance and instead 'adopt a patriotic stance and organize their narratives around the basic conflict between 'us' and 'them,' between 'our nation' and its enemies' (Allan 1999, Hallin 1986, quoted in Mihelj 2009, p. 63). This type of reporting is not only typical of war coverage, but also for other conflict situations as well, such as various national ceremonies (Mihelj 2009). In this sense, the media act as a source of national integration because, as previous studies have shown, 'most domestic mass media support national foreign policy aims and goals, especially when the national interest is threatened' (Bloch and Lehman-Wilzig 2010, p. 153). The important feature of this type of journalism is that it is related to political consensus. This means that journalists do not question certain values that are considered to be a matter of consensus in the society, but rather implicitly and explicitly advocate these values.

According to Hallin, (1994) there are three spheres in the field of journalism: (1) the sphere of consensus, (2) the sphere of legitimate controversy and (3) the sphere of deviance. Only within the sphere of legitimate controversy objective journalism

dominates and ‘neutrality and balance are the primary journalist values’ (Hallin 1994, p. 47), while in the spheres of ‘consensus’ and ‘beyond legitimate controversy’ journalists feel it is their duty to advocate certain consensus values or refuse to publish the voices of certain social actors who are considered by journalists and the political mainstream of the society to be unworthy of being heard (Hallin 1994). However, whereas legitimate controversy in the U.S., for example, exists along the lines of political divisions between Republicans and Democrats (right vs. left), the political context in B&H is completely different. The sphere of legitimate controversy appears primarily within individual ethno-political groups on issues debated within that group. In other words, political parties that address the same ethnic community more often than not attain the minimum of agreement on political issues that are considered to be ethnically relevant. This does not mean that there aren’t political controversies that depart from the logic of ethnic affiliation. However, controversies between ethnic communities are more likely to be reflected beyond the sphere of legitimate controversy in the media. Application of Hallin’s concept to Bosnia and Herzegovina, therefore, requires consideration of ethno-national divisions between political parties, as well as the ethno-national segmentation of the media landscape.

## The nature of political divisions in B&H

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a complex administrative structure, consisting of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and the Republika Srpska (RS), as well as a separate jurisdiction – the Brčko District.<sup>2</sup> Power distribution is

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<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Federation of B&H consists of 10 cantons and 68 municipalities. Additionally, the smallest administrative units are Municipalities, with 141 in both entities.

arranged between representatives of the three constituent peoples, Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. The political realm of Bosnia and Herzegovina is characterized by a weak central government, with constant polarizations on the issue of centralization vs. succession of the state.<sup>3</sup> The institutions at different administrative levels have proven to be dysfunctional and lacking consensus over key political issues. No clear strategy that could ensure a stable future for Bosnia and Herzegovina has been developed (Bieber 2005, p. 63).

The major divisions and polarizations in the country are based on ethno-national diversification. Basically, the divisions and power relations developed prior and during the war have come to dominantly determine the actions of political actors during peacetime as well. Vlaisavljevic points out that the reality of the war did not end in the territory of the former Yugoslavia with the conclusion of the war, but created a 'post-war reality and it still over-determines it in every important aspect' (2007, p. 78). The processes of (re)constitution of nations throughout the region have been going on under newly formed sovereignties. New definitions of national identities are being created on the basis of differentiation of the elements of what previously was a common identity. Every ethno-national collective identity is defined as a 'particular, separate substantial identity differing from the others' (Mujkić 2007, p. 86). Therefore, different ethnic communities continue to be seen as communities with differing interests and as Belloni (2007, p. 14) stresses: 'national/ethnic

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<sup>3</sup> As Belloni has stated: »Bosniaks continue to see the strengthening of the central Bosnian state as their main political goal. Many Serbs and Croats prefer wide local autonomy and the development of further ties with neighboring Serbia and Croatia, respectively« (p. 1). The sovereignty and sustainability of Bosnia and Herzegovina is being questioned especially by the political representatives of the Serb ethnic community, stressing that B&H is a 'virtual State,' artificially sustained by the international community (OHR 2010).



differences prevent the universal acceptance of the state by its population. The lack of social cohesion further undermines the state's ability to formulate and implement policy' (See more in Kasipovic 2005).

The party system follows such identity and interest divisions, and has been marked by the domination of parties with ethno-national orientation since the nineties (Bieber 2005, p. 40). The parties have advocated the supposed interests of one constituent people, and thereby have been deepening the ethno-political fragmentation. Almost every political party addresses a single ethnic community. As Bieber notes, the support of the voters is assured through electoral campaigns based on reinforcing national divisions established in the nineties, where candidates are even afraid of having people from other ethnicities as their voters (Bieber 2005, p. 108), since this would undermine the arguments for their legitimacy in representing a particular, ethnically specific interest.

## Politics and media in B&H

The characteristic of political life which Jakubowicz marks as 'partitocrazia' (2008, p. 112) is very important for understanding the relation of the political sphere and media in post-communist countries. This term primarily relates to the monopolization of public life by political parties and consequently to the exclusion of other social actors from decision making processes. In practice this means that the interests of the public are reflected solely through political representation and the electoral system, while the civil sector does not significantly influence the decisions making process otherwise. According to Carothers (2002), B&H belongs to the group of countries with feckless pluralism where »political participation, though broad at election time, extends little beyond voting« (p. 10). In the context of B&H, nationalistic parties have

monopolized public life since the nineties, while employing political rhetoric to which media cannot be immune.

The relations between the media and political elites in B&H could also be largely described in terms of the Mediterranean polarized-pluralist model of media developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). A major characteristic of this model is a high level of political parallelism, with a great number of media as well as the common political instrumentalization of media. Journalism as a profession is not clearly separated from political activism, while the autonomy of journalists is limited (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 73, 74). Furthermore, Jakubowicz believes that post-communist countries such as B&H have some of the characteristics of the polarized-pluralist model present in the countries of southern Europe, which primarily include: late democratization, insufficient economic development, weak rational-legal authority combined with a dirigiste state and incomplete modernization (Jakubowicz 2008, p. 111). Still, B&H could be classified as a particular sub-type of the polarized pluralist media model, since the nature of social polarization in B&H is not a matter of simple divisions of political standpoints, but divisions between ethno-national politics.

On the other hand, B&H is a post-conflict society and its entire media system has been redesigned through what Metzger refers to as 'information intervention' (Thompson 2002, p. 41). In this way, the process of the democratization of the media was initiated and imposed from the outside by the international community and met with resistance, or at best indifference, among local actors. One outcome of this media intervention has been significant positive steps aimed at achieving the independence and sustainability of the media sector, and the protection of journalistic freedoms and professional standards in B&H. Journalistic professional values are elaborated within media laws, regulations and codes of conduct. This is how, for example, libel has been decriminalized and put into the civil law domain, independent regulatory bodies have been formed, and basic journalistic principles of

media impartiality and professionalism defined in the Press Code. Additionally, the incitement of national, racial and religious hatred is proscribed by the Criminal law,<sup>4</sup> as well as the Code on broadcasting for RTV programs. Although professional norms are generally developed at a formal level, the mechanisms of their implementation are flawed, especially when it comes to the press.<sup>5</sup> Although there are legal norms protecting and promoting the freedom and independence of media, they exist within a socio-political context dominantly marked by ethno-politics which strongly undermine their implementation.

The negative influence of the socio-political context on media content can be the result of highly ethno-politicized sources of information, as well as the fear among journalists of exposing themselves to the consequences of confronting the interests of political elites. In the context of the conflict between different ethnic groups, the main dilemma facing journalists is whether to follow professional standards or to embrace the 'correct' interpretation of events according to the logic of ethnic belonging. Zendberg and Neiger (2005, p. 27- 131) claim that journalists are caught in the gap between their nation and their profession. However, the two – affiliation with their nation and with their profession – are not necessarily seen as incompatible by the journalists themselves, since the way that journalists perceive social events can be inseparably intertwined with the imagery of their nation. Hence, journalists can have the same political and ideological perspectives as politicians. Still, the journalists

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<sup>4</sup> However, only the Criminal law of FB&H explicitly proscribes incitement of hatred by media and journalists; the Criminal laws of the RS and B&H do not. See more in Vehabovic et al. 2009.

<sup>5</sup> While the Communication Regulatory Agency has executive authority over the implementation of broadcasting regulations, the Press Council is a self regulatory body, meaning that the implementation of norms defined by the Press Code entirely depend on the voluntary compliance of editorial staff in print media.

identities are not fixed but fluid and unstable, which means that journalists can constantly move between belonging to their nation and to their profession.

The majority of the journalists interviewed in research conducted at the end of 2009 and at the beginning of 2010 stated that the content of most media in B&H revealed that they favored certain political options, specifically in print media outlets:

Media are largely a mirror of political divisions in B&H, primarily divisions on an ethnic and entity level, which is manifested in completely different interpretative keys in reporting on the same events, depending on which ethnic group a particular media organization is closer to geographically and ideologically. This situation results in opposed media discourses on key social issues (Hodzic 2010, p. 20)

Udovicic (2010) makes a similar conclusion after analyzing the election campaign in 2010, indicating the strong connections between the media and political options:

This monitoring confirmed the belief of analysts in independent professional circles, as well as among readers and viewers, that nearly all media in their editorial policies lean more or less visibly toward a specific political option (and some toward a specific political party) (Udovicic 2010, p. 9).

With regard to the specific political affiliations of daily newspapers included in this research, the following connections can be made. *Oslobodenje*, based in Sarajevo, a newspaper that was founded at the peak of World War Two and the newspaper that had the strongest connections with communist leaders in socialist Yugoslavia, today is basically oriented towards leftist political options. The monitoring of reporting on the elections in 2010 shows that this newspaper still, although not as explicitly, is oriented towards the *Social-democratic party of B&H* and that it is mainly focused on the activities of political parties from the Federation of B&H (Udovicic 2010, p. 91). In contrast, *Dnevni avaz*, also based in Sarajevo, was founded at the end of the last war and has been seen as being affiliated with leading the Bosniak political parties since its inception. In 2010, the owner of this newspaper founded a political party and decided to be one of the candidates for the Presidency of B&H. Suddenly,

*Dnevni avaz* has started severely criticizing the ruling parties in the Federation of B&H, the *Party of Democratic Action* and the *Party for B&H* and has become an open promoter of the newly established *Party for a Better Future*. *Nezavisne novine* from Banja Luka is strongly connected with the ruling party in the Republika Srpska, the *Alliance of Independent Social-democrats (SNSD)*. In a recently published open letter to Milorad Dodik, the president of the SNSD, the owner of *Nezavisne novine* does not hide his friendship with Dodik (open letter of Željko Kopanja to Milorad Dodik, 2010). The situation is the same with the other newspaper owned by Kopanja, *Glas Srpske* from Banja Luka. Although this newspaper was connected to the previously ruling *Serbian Democratic Party* for a long period, the change happened after the daily was privatized in 2008 and Kopanja in effect became its owner. As the monitoring of reporting on elections in 2010 showed, *Glas Srpske* now supports the ruling SNSD (Udovicic 2010, p. 68). Still, although both newspapers are owned by the same man, they are conceptually different. *Nezavisne novine* has the ambition to cover the readership of the entire B&H, whereas *Glas Srpske* is oriented to Serb readers from the Republika Srpska. Lastly, *Dnevni list* from Mostar is primarily oriented towards Croat readership in B&H and has declared itself to be a paper in the Croatian language. *Dnevni list* is mostly seen as being affiliated with Croat nationalist parties. The results of the monitoring of the reporting on elections showed that this newspaper is affiliated with the *Croatian Democratic Union 1990* party, as they openly supported their candidate for the Presidency (Udovicic 2010, p. 75).

Therefore, available reports unquestionably suggest that there are strong ties between the world of politics and the world of journalism in B&H. As indicated above, these ties reflect not only the existing ethno-political divisions of the society of B&H, but reveal the political preferences of certain newspapers within ethnic groups as well.

## Attitudes of political parties towards Karadžić

Karadžić's arrest and trial, which occurred 13 years after the war in B&H ended, were followed by strong emotions and mutually opposed perspectives from different ethnic groups. These interpretations of the case indicate the way in which the past, as well as the future political relations in B&H and the region, are perceived. More precisely, the interpretative frameworks of different ethno-political tribunes are considerably divergent. On the other hand, the internal interpretative framework within every ethnic community is characterized by a high degree of conformity.

When it comes to Bosniak politics regarding Radovan Karadžić, the perspective of political parties addressing Bosniak voters is that, beside Slobodan Milošević, he is the most responsible for the aggression against B&H and for the war crimes committed against non-Serbs in Bosnian territory. In addition, there is the well-developed idea that it is necessary to take into consideration the consequences of Karadžić's politics, and not just to put him on trial. In that context, these political parties tend to question the existence of the Republika Srpska, deeming it a creation based on crimes and ethnic cleansing, given the fact that Karadžić was its founder and first president. There are no significant differences among the three leading political parties with mainly Bosniak voters, the *Party for B&H*, the *Party of Democratic Action* and the *Social-democratic Party*, when it comes to their perspectives on this issue.

For example, Zlatko Lagumdžija, the president of the *Social-democratic Party (SDP)*, a party that is civic-oriented in character (since civil and economic issues rather than national interests are put forward in their agenda) but supported nevertheless mainly by Bosniaks, said that:

The time of ethnic states with one nation and one religion...[this] is the last [such] project in the 20th century attempted in Europe. Radovan Karadžić represents the end of one project and this project has to be put on trial at the Hague. The project of creating divided single-national states based on crimes and genocide is something that should clearly stay in the past (SDP 2010)

With regard to political parties that count on the votes of Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina, generally two options can be identified. The first is the radical one led by the *Serbian Democratic Party (SDS)* which has never clearly distanced itself from its first president Radovan Karadžić. Moreover, cooperation with the Hague tribunal in the period of SDS rule was denied for a long period by authorities in the RS, which showed unwillingness to put the war criminals to trial. The official statement on behalf of the SDS emphasized the importance of the contribution of Karadžić to the establishment of the Republika Srpska in an implicitly positive light, stating that the arrest of Karadžić will be instrumentalized by parties from the FB&H for ‘attacking’ the Republika Srpska once again:

While holding the positions of the first president of the Serbian Democratic Party and the first president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadžić contributed significantly to its establishment. The presidency of the Serbian Democratic Party does not accept the statement of Milorad Dodik that the arrest is a relief for the Republika Srpska. On the contrary, the reaction from Sarajevo is worrying us and we are sure that the attacks on the RS will now only be intensified. (SDS 2008)

The second stance is expressed by the current ruling party, the *Alliance of Independent Social Democrats SNSD*, which takes the position of a certain distance from Karadžić as a person prosecuted for war crimes. The president of the SNSD, Milorad Dodik, publicly accused Karadžić on several occasions of crimes and robbery of Serbs, but not for the war crimes committed against non-Serbs. Karadžić’s arrest in the discourse of this politics is mostly connected with fulfilling obligations towards the Hague tribunal.

I believe it is just fulfilling this obligation and that the arrest of Radovan Karadžić is the obligation given by Dayton, its main principle of relations, and the realization of Dayton itself

(...)We are facing many irresponsible statements coming from certain politicians both in the RS and in Sarajevo. I can understand that the families of victims react emotionally but I cannot understand why responsible politicians are trying to take a great number of people on the streets of Sarajevo and in this way draw attention to only one version of the truth. (Milorad Dodik, the prime minister of the RS 2008)

Despite the differences in the points of view of these two political parties in the RS, the bottom line of consensus among both options is that even if the Hague tribunal charges Karadžić, the Republika Srpska would remain unquestionable. Furthermore, the crimes committed against non-Serbs that Karadžić is accused of are regularly relativized by calling for the need to bring all responsible persons on all sides to court. The case is interpreted in light of the prescribed need to cooperate with the international court, but mostly without thematizing the crimes and the victims themselves.

When it comes to the political agenda of Croat parties in B&H, it could be said that the arrest is evaluated positively, as a positive indicator of the political future of the country. However, Croat political elites are not focused on the trial of Karadžić as much as Bosniak and Serb elites. This could be explained by the fact that Croat elites are dominantly engaged in the rhetoric of establishing a third, Croat entity in B&H. The main conflict over this issue appears between Croat elites and Bosniak political parties who oppose such secessionist ideas. Therefore, for the Croat political elites the case of Karadžić is irrelevant, since it can't be employed in advocating their dominant policy. On the occasion of the arrest Radovan Karadžić, HDZ BiH made a routine statement emphasizing that 'extraditing him continues the process of arresting the remaining Hague suspects which are to be put to trial' and that 'it is high time we turned to the future' and (...) 'find the best solution for the road of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards Euro-Atlantic integration' (HDZ 2008).

In short, it can be concluded that there are significant differences among political parties in B&H in their views on the arrest of Radovan Karadžić, depending on the ethno-national group they aim to represent. The parties addressing Bosniak voters



unanimously find this issue extremely important and interpret it in a similar manner. Parties addressing Serbs find this issue very important, and although they take two perspectives differing from each other to some extent, they achieve a basic consensus on the issues related to the Karadžić case. Representatives of Croat political parties don't perceive this topic as essential, but have made positive statements about bringing Karadžić to court.

## Analytical framework and research methodology

The initial hypothesis of this chapter is that the nationalistic/patriotic type of journalism can be detected as a dominant journalist approach when reporting on controversial social events such as Radovan Karadžić's arrest and trial. Media discourses are therefore expected to be strongly divided along an ethno-national axis, with ethno-nationalistic interpretative frameworks heavily engaged.

Similarities and differences in the reporting of media that can be expected refer primarily to the 'ethnic origin' of media themselves. This means that we expect the differences among the media based in Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar, since the media function within different ethno-ideological environments. At the same time, we expect similarities among the media situated within a particular city.<sup>6</sup> In other words, since the Karadžić case is associated with differing and conflicting attitudes of ethno-national political elites, we can expect to find indicators of patriotic reporting.

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<sup>6</sup> In the case of Mostar, only one daily newspaper was analyzed; hence it is impossible to determine differences between papers published in Mostar.

Additionally, reporting on the Karadžić case is compared to regular reporting, e.g. reporting on a non-controversial issue that is not as likely to be associated with patriotic reporting. Therefore, reporting on European integration processes is used for comparison (Dzihana 2009). This issue is rare in that it does not invoke major disagreements between different ethno-national elites. On the contrary, as Bieber states, the subject of European integration: 'has emerged as the only tentative Bosnia-wide political consensus and cross-party and cross-ethnic commitment' (Bieber 2005, p. 146).

The research methodology was based on content analysis of articles published in several print media. Content analysis, as a technique for systematic and quantitative description of manifest communication content (Berelson 1952, p. 18), was chosen because it enables getting information about a large amount of analyzed units which then provide insight into the general patterns of reporting. In addition, content analysis enables a quantitative comparison between different analyzed categories, thus providing insights on similarities and differences between newspapers.

The hypothesis on differences between media in terms of ethnic origin was tested through several indicators. The first indicator was the prominence of the topic within newspapers. To evaluate prominence we analyzed a number of published articles, the headlines on front pages, the lengths of articles and the use of photographs within articles. The basic unit of analysis was an article. The basic assumption was that 'the more newsworthy an event is judged to be, the more prominently it will be covered by the mass media' (Shoemaker and Reese 1991, p. 3). Obviously, if the reporting about the arrest and trial of Radovan Karadžić is more prominent than reporting about European integrations in particular newspapers, we can conclude that the Karadžić case is more newsworthy for the editorial staff of certain newspapers.

The second category was the manner in which Karadžić was named, which we took as an indicator of possible differences between newspapers in social processes and practices. As Volčič and Erjavec explain:

Naming and labeling of a politician is not only a descriptive usage of linguistic resources, but can be indicative of the social processes and practices embedded in the communicative situation regarding, for instance, the social and political position of this leader within society. (2009, p. 26)

For the analysis of naming Karadžić, we used a semantic approach. Van Dijk notes that ‘descriptions and references to politicians, public figures, and organizations and their actions are of course a function of politically and ideologically based opinions and attitudes’ (1997, p. 28). We adapted the semantic field developed by Volčić and Erjavec (2009) in order to explore the context in which the media placed Karadžić. On this occasion, the basic unit of analysis was an instance of naming (cases), meaning that several different ways of naming could be detected within one article, and then categorized into several categories accordingly. As Montgomery reminds us (1995, p. 228): ‘there is no absolutely neutral and disinterested way of apprehending and representing the world. Language always helps to select, arrange, organize, and evaluate experience, even when we are least conscious of it doing so.’ Therefore, semantic analysis was employed with the intention to explore to what extent the representations of Karadžić through naming strategies are indicative of the differing ideological backgrounds of the newspapers analyzed. The apprehensions and evaluations of the authors and media were expected to be revealed through analysis of the naming strategies for Karadžić. Different apprehensions implied through different naming practices can be illustrated by the different practices of naming a protesting people: as a ‘mob,’ ‘mass’ or, quite differently, ‘demonstrators.’ Also, it matters if their act will be described as ‘roaring’ or ‘strong protesting’ (Van Dijk 1991). The result of semantic analysis therefore also provides insights into the differences and similarities between print media in B&H, as well as Serbia and Croatia, possibly revealing ‘ethnic patterns’ in the naming of Karadžić.

Additionally, the valence of representing Karadžić was assessed, i.e. whether Karadžić was named and labeled in a positive, negative, or neutral manner. Three naming categories were analyzed in this sense: naming Karadžić as Dragan Dabić, naming

Karadžić in the context of his nation, and lastly referring to Karadžić in the context of his personal characteristics. Additional analysis of these three categories enabled deciphering the valence in which naming based on either personal context or the context of national belongingness are embedded, and thus throw more light on the editorial stance towards Karadžić.

Representations of Karadžić were assessed as positive if they primarily relied on pointing out Karadžić's positive professional or personal characteristics, such as: being a good doctor, a miracle worker, a good Serb or generally a good man. For example:

There was no trace of that likeable guru, Dragan David Dabić, 'a researcher in the field of psychiatrics and bio-energy' whose character represented the successful combination of 'Freud and a bohemian from Skadarlija.' (N.N. 2008, p. 10)

Representations of Karadžić were assessed as negative if they primarily relied on his negative personal characteristics, or on his role in war crimes; for example if he were presented as a cheater, as someone who was mocking everyone by hiding before he was arrested, as the man responsible for the death of thousands of people, or simply as a bad person. For example:

the people like Karadžić, Mladic, Milosevic, Serbian academics, 'bandits' like Vojislav Seselj and others, created an infamous history for their own people and in the name of nationalist ideology directed and committed numerous crimes. (Körbler 2008, p. 39)

The third context, which is neutral, is where there is reliance on simple facts, with no attempt to present Karadžić either as a good or bad man, and retaining impartiality. For example

The ID which Radovan Karadžić owned at the moment of his arrest, with the name of Dragan Dabić, was a fake. (E.R. 2008. p. 20)

The valence was assessed by one coder. Keeping in mind that determining the valence includes the subjectivity of the coder, we used a sample of 20% to do an

inter-coder reliability test, which showed a satisfying level of compliance between coders ( $p=0.83$ ).

Newspapers with the greatest circulation were selected for content analysis, while also respecting the criteria of suitable regional incidence. According to these criteria, the following dailies were chosen: *Dnevni avaz* and *Oslobodjenje* from Sarajevo, *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas Srpske* from Banja Luka and *Dnevni list* from Mostar. Additionally, on the basis of the same criteria two dailies from Zagreb (*Večernji list*) and Belgrade (*Večernje novosti*) were included in the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

The sample of newspaper content included reporting on Radovan Karadžić's arrest and trial and was taken from the following periods:

- July 21st - 25th 2008 - five days after the arrest

- Since July 2008 - five days randomly chosen from each of the following twelve months, based on the following pattern of stratification: five days of the first week of August 2008, five days of the second week of September 2008, five days of the third week of October 2008, etc.

The articles were coded by two trained coders. 584 articles were selected from 5 Bosnian newspapers (161 from *Oslobodjenje*, 145 from *Dnevni avaz*, 110 from *Glas Srpske*, 105 from *Nezavisne novine* and 63 from *Dnevni list*). For the second part of the analysis- analysis of naming practices- 28 articles from *Večernji list* (Croatia) and 108 articles from *Večernje novosti* (Serbia) were included additionally. All together,

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<sup>7</sup> The newspapers *Oslobodjenje*, *Dnevni Avaz* and *Nezavisne novine* have been searched through digital archive of Mediacentar (Infobiro) on the basis of the key words 'Karadžić, Karadžića, Karadžiću, Karadžićem.' *Dnevni list* and *Glas Srpske* were accessed through their own archives of their published editions. Articles from *Večernji list* were accessed through the online archives of the National and University Library in Zagreb; articles from *Večernje novosti* were accessed through the Ebart online archives (<<http://www.arhiv.rs/>>).

750 articles were analyzed. A chi square test was used for calculating statistical significance of differences between observed data and data we expected to obtain according to specific hypotheses.

Keeping in mind the starting hypothesis of this research on nationalistic/patriotic journalism as the dominant journalistic approach when reporting on controversial social events, the key research questions were:

- For daily newspapers, is it more newsworthy to report about Karadžić or about EU integration? Are there differences between newspapers published in three cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Mostar), that is, do these differences comply with the existing differences among political parties connected to these three cities? Are there significant differences between newspapers in one city?
- Are there significant differences among newspapers analyzed regarding how they name Karadžić? How are these differences reflected? Does the context in which daily newspapers put Karadžić coincide with the existing ethno-national divisions in B&H and in the region?

## Research results:

### (a) Prominence of articles

The way in which newspapers pay attention to a certain topic can be seen from different indicators, such as the frequency of announcements on the front page, the articles' layouts, the size of the articles, use of photographs, type of articles, etc. Although these data cannot provide information about the precise character of the articles that are being analyzed, they help us understand the general relation of editorial staff towards a certain topic. Specifically, these data can be helpful in estimating the newsworthiness attributed to a certain event.

The prominence of the articles related to the Karadžić case were compared between dailies that are published in BiH, but not those from Croatia and Serbia. The prominence in Serbian and Croatian dailies is supposedly lessened by the simple fact that state level events are routinely given more prominence if compared to news from neighboring countries. Although the case of Karadžić is relevant to the whole region, it has special relevance for B&H as a country where the war atrocities associated with Karadžić primarily took place.

The research results are contrasted with the findings of research on media reports about EU integration. This topic was chosen for comparison because it is considered to be non-controversial in the sense that political elites within all three ethnic groups agree that there is a need to progress along the path of BiH's European integration.

Specifically, we will compare four categories: (1) the number of published articles; (2) the number of announcements on the front page; (3) the number of small articles

and (4) the number of photographs published along the texts in five daily newspapers in BiH when it comes to reporting about Karadžić and about the EU integrations. We will use the Chi-square test to establish whether there are statistically significant differences among the five newspapers in general and then whether there are differences between the newspapers published in one city (for example, between the newspapers published in Sarajevo) and between the newspapers published in different cities (for example, the newspapers from Banjaluka and the newspapers from Sarajevo).

### **Number of articles**

The research results show that there is a statistically significant difference among five analyzed newspapers when reporting about the case of Karadžić ( $\chi=49.9$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

The papers based in Sarajevo (addressed primarily towards Bosniak readership) paid more attention to reporting about Karadžić than other papers. More than the half of all published articles concerning the Karadžić case (52% out of  $N=584$  articles) analyzed here were from the two papers from Sarajevo, with no significant difference between them ( $\chi=0.8$ ;  $p=0.360$ ). A great deal of attention to the topic was also given by the papers from Banja Luka (37%;  $N=584$ ), with no significant difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=0.1$ ;  $p=0.733$ ). The editorial staff of *Dnevni list* from Mostar did not attribute particular significance to this case, publishing the lowest number of articles compared to other newspapers (11% of all articles;  $N=584$ ).

There is a statistically significant difference between the newspapers based in Sarajevo and in Banjaluka ( $\chi=15.9$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), as well as between dailies from Sarajevo and *Dnevni list* from Mostar (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Dnevni avaz*  $\chi=32.3$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and between dailies from Banjaluka and *Dnevni list* from Mostar (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Nezavisne novine*  $\chi=10.5$ ;  $p=0.001$ ).



**Table 1:**  
**Number of articles per newspapers**

Newspapers	Reporting about Radovan Karadžić 2008/2009		Reporting about EU integration 2008/2009	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OSLOBODENJE	161	27,6	242	22,1
DNEVNI AVAZ	145	24,8	254	23,2
GLAS SRPSKE	110	18,8	177	16,2
NEZAVISNE NOVINE	105	18,0	248	22,6
DNEVNI LIST	63	10,8	174	15,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>1095</b>	<b>100,0</b>

In the case of reporting on EU integration, the largest number of articles was again published in Sarajevo daily newspapers (45% of the total number of articles analyzed), while in Banja Luka dailies 38% of articles were published, and 16% in *Dnevni list* from Mostar. There is a statistically significant difference among the five newspapers ( $\chi=29.2$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

There is no statistically significant difference between Sarajevo dailies ( $\chi=0.3$ ;  $p=0.590$ ). On the other hand, between *Nezavisne novine* and *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka there is a statistically significant difference ( $\chi=11.9$ ;  $p=0.001$ ).

The analysis of differences between media from different cities shows that in fact, there is the difference between *Glas Srpske* and Sarajevo dailies (the difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Oslobodenje*  $\chi=10.1$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) but not between *Nezavisne novine* and dailies from Sarajevo (the difference between *Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni avaz*  $\chi=0.1$ ;  $p=0.789$ ). On the other hand, *Dnevni list* differs from Sarajevo

dailies and *Nezavisne novine* (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Oslobodenje*  $\chi=11.1$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) but it does not differ from *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=0.0$ ;  $p=0.873$ ).

Therefore, the grouping of newspapers based on the frequency of reporting on EU integrations does not coincide with an ethno-national mold as indicated by the frequency of reporting about the case of Radovan Karadžić.

### **Appearance of articles on the front page**

There are significant differences among newspapers regarding the percentage of articles about the Karadžić case that appeared on the front page. The difference among five daily newspapers in the number of announcements is statistically significant ( $\chi=48.9$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

The difference between dailies from Sarajevo in this respect (42% of articles from *Oslobodenje* contrasted with 27% of articles in *Dnevni avaz*) is statistically significant ( $\chi=8.4$ ;  $p=0.004$ ), as well as the difference between newspapers from Banja Luka (*Glas Srpske* 7%, *Nezavisne novine* 25%), ( $\chi=12.4$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

Comparison between media from different cities leads to conclusion that *Oslobodenje* from Sarajevo differs from dailies from Banjaluka (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=12.2$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) as well as from *Dnevni list* ( $\chi=8.4$ ;  $p=0.004$ ), whereas *Avaz* differs only from *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=19.0$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). There is no statistically significant difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=0,7$ ;  $p=0,417$ ) and neither between *Nezavisne novine* and *Dnevni list* ( $\chi=0.0$ ;  $p=1.000$ ). Still, there is a statistically significant difference between *Dnevni list* and *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka ( $\chi=10.3$ ;  $p=0.001$ ).

Therefore it can be concluded that the established differences and similarities in terms of percentage of announcements between analyzed dailies did not directly follow the

ethnic pattern of differentiation. In any case, it is indicative that *Glas Srpske* had an exceptionally low percentage of articles related to Karadžić, while on the other hand, *Oslobodenje* from Sarajevo had the greatest percentage of such announcements.

**Table 2:**  
**Front page articles**

Newspapers	Reporting about Radovan Karadžić 2008/2009		Reporting about EU integration 2008/2009	
	Frequency	Percent <sup>8</sup>	Frequency	Percent <sup>9</sup>
OSLOBOĐENJE	67	41.61	36	14,88
DNEVNI AVAZ	39	26.90	39	15,35
GLAS SRPSKE	8	7.27	33	18,64
NEZAVISNE NOVINE	26	24.76	45	18,15
DNEVNI LIST	15	23.81	32	18,39
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>		<b>185</b>	

On the other hand, the percentages of appearances on the front page when reporting about EU integration were quite similar in these five dailies, and varied from 15% of articles related to EU integration appearing on the front page in the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodenje*, to 19% in *Glas Srpske* from Banja Luka. The difference between newspapers is not statistically significant ( $\chi=2.1$ ;  $p=0.723$ ).

<sup>8</sup> Percentages are relative, in relation to the total number of articles of each newspaper. The total sum of percentages is therefore not 100.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

### The length of the articles

When we talk about reporting about Radovan Karadžić most articles published in these five newspapers in Bosnia and Herzegovina were short articles, i.e. articles that do not exceed 1/6 of the newspaper page. The newspapers from Banjaluka were reporting about the arrest and trial of Karadžić in the form of short articles the most– 73%, then there is *Dnevni list* iz from Mostar with 70% and in the end, Sarajevo dailies where the percentage of short articles was rather lower - 48% of short articles. The difference between five analyzed newspapers is statistically significant ( $\chi=42.0$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

Between daily newspapers from Banjaluka, *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine*, there is no statistically significant difference regarding the share of short articles ( $\chi=0.1$ ;  $p=0.612$ ). Also, there was no significant difference between the two dailies from Sarajevo *Dnevni avaz* and *Oslobodenje* ( $\chi=0.3$ ;  $p=0.591$ ).

With regard to the difference among cities, there is no significant difference in using short articles between *Dnevni list* from Mostar and dailies from Banjaluka (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=0.1$ ;  $p=0.625$ ), but there is a difference between between *Dnevni list* and Sarajevo dailies (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Dnevni avaz* ( $\chi=7.3$ ;  $p=0.007$ ) as well as between dailies from Sarajevo and Banjaluka ( $\chi=35.5$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

This means that Sarajevo dailies, compared to dailies from Banjaluka and Mostar, paid more attention to the case, not only in terms of frequency, but by the length of the articles as well.

For comparison, when it comes to the length of articles reporting about EU integration, differences among newspapers were smaller and not statistically significant ( $\chi=6.7$ ;  $p=0.155$ ). In 52 % of cases, Sarajevo dailies reported in the form of short articles, while Banja Luka dailies did this in 59 percent of cases, just as *Dnevni list* from Mostar.

**Table 3:**  
**Number of short articles**

Newspapers	Reporting about Radovan Karadžić 2008/2009		Reporting about EU integration 2008/2009	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
OSLOBODENJE	75	46.58	120	49.59
DNEVNI AVAZ	72	49.66	139	54.72
GLAS SRPSKE	80	74.10	108	61.02
NEZAVISNE NOVINE	77	73.33	136	54.84
DNEVNI LIST	44	69.84	103	59.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>348</b>		<b>606</b>	

### The use of photographs within the articles<sup>10</sup>

Five analyzed newspapers have statistically significant differences when it comes to the usage of photographs along with the articles about Radovan Karadžić ( $\chi=81.8$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). With regard to this, *Dnevni list* from Mostar published photographs the most, in 91% of texts, then follow the dailies from Sarajevo with 75% of articles with photographs. Far behind are the dailies from Banjaluka which did so in only 43% of cases.

There are almost no differences between Sarajevo dailies regarding the usage of photographs within the articles ( $\chi=0.3$ ;  $p=0.599$ ), and the differences between the papers from Banjaluka are not statistically significant ( $\chi=2.0$ ;  $p=0.156$ ).

<sup>10</sup> The results are not compared with articles on EU integrations, since we lack data on the latter in this regard.

When it comes to the distribution over the cities, *Dnevni list* from Mostar is statistically significantly different than the newspapers from Banjaluka (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=33.5$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), as well as from the newspapers from Sarajevo (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Oslobodenje* ( $\chi=6.9$ ;  $p=0.008$ ). Also, there is a statistically significant difference between the newspapers from Sarajevo and Banjaluka ( $\chi=55.3$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

**Table 4:**  
**Number of articles with photography**

Newspapers	Reporting about Radovan Karadžić 2008/2009	
	Frequency	Percent
OSLOBODENJE	123	76.40
DNEVNI AVAZ	107	73.79
GLAS SRPSKE	52	47.27
NEZAVISNE NOVINE	40	38.10
DNEVNI LIST	57	90.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	

Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between the newspapers from Sarajevo and those from Banjaluka and Mostar in the usage of photographs additionally upholds the hypothesis on the ethno-national lines of differentiation. While dailies from Mostar and Sarajevo emphasize the importance of this event by publishing photographs with texts, Banjaluka dailies tend to lessen the importance of reporting about Karadžić by using a rather smaller number of photographs.

## (b) Naming strategies

The category to be analyzed here refers to how Radovan Karadžić was named. We will compare the ways of naming Radovan Karadžić by using seven categories (see Table 5) as well as the degree of using the last three categories in positive, negative or neutral context. We will apply Chi-square test to determine whether there are statistically significant differences among seven newspapers. After that, we will examine whether there are differences between media from both different ethno-national backgrounds and ethno-national structure of their readership (*Dnevni avaz* and *Oslobodjenje*, with primarily Bosniak readership- hereafter named as ‘Bosniak Newspapers’; *Nezavisne novine*, *Glas Srpske* and *Večernje novosti*, with primarily Serb readership - hereafter named as ‘Serb newspapers’; *Dnevni list* i *Večernji list*, with primary Croatian readership- hereafter named as ‘Croatian newspapers’<sup>11</sup>).

As has been noted, the manner of naming is not a neutral category, and can potentially reveal the ideological positions informing the reporting on the Karadžić case. For the purposes of exploring apprehensions and evaluations behind naming practices, we have adapted semantic fields developed by Erjavec and Volčič (2009), which consist of seven categories, depending on whether Karadžić is mentioned only by name, whether he is set in the context of war crimes, the trial, politics, his persona while hiding from the Hague Tribunal, his nation, or if some other personal

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<sup>11</sup> The terms ‘Croatian’ ‘Serb’ and ‘Bosniak newspapers’ are used solely for the purpose of clear differentiation amongst newspaper, based on difference in ethno-national surroundings and ethno-national structure of readership. The newspapers themselves do not declare as such.

**Table 5:**  
**Examples of the lexicalization of Radovan Karadžić in news items**

<b>Naming category</b>	Typical examples of key words or phrases referring to Karadžić
<b>Only name</b>	Radovan Karadžić; Karadžić, Raša.
<b>War crimes</b>	War criminal; Person most responsible for the most serious crimes/evil; The main suspect for war crimes; One of the biggest criminals in history.
<b>Hague Tribunal</b>	Hague fugitive; The most wanted fugitive; The latest prisoner of the Hague.
<b>Politics</b>	Dodik's teacher; The first figure of the RS; War president; Ex-leader of Bosnian Serbs; President-slayer.
<b>Dragan Dabić</b>	Neuro-psychiatrist, researcher in the field of psychology; exhibitionist, Dragan Dabić.
<b>Serbs/nation</b>	Hero; Symbol of the resistance of the endangered Serb people; Legend; A victim of betrayal.
<b>Other personal characteristics</b>	The best of all Karadžićs; A great man, giant; Communicative; (Average, psychopath of Durmitor) psychiatrist; Open, Approachable; Bohemian, mystic, guru.

characteristics are mentioned. The examples of how Karadžić is named can be seen in table 5.

There were overall 885 naming instances identified. In total, in most of the cases only Karadžić's name was used (337 cases out of 885). The next most frequent categories referred to Karadžić in the context of politics (149), the Hague tribunal (142) and war crimes (136). To a lesser extent, Karadžić's personal characteristics were used (53 cases). The name Dragan Dabić was used in 39 cases, and national determinants in 29 cases. The following table shows how Karadžić was named in analyzed newspapers.



**Table 6: Lexicalization of Radovan Karadžić in news items**

Newspapers		Manners of naming Karadžić						Other personal characteristics	Total*
		Only name	War Crimes	Hague Tribunal	Dragan Politics	Serbs/ Dabić	Serbs/ nation		
<b>OSLOBOĐENJE</b>	Count	62	44	35	44	14	10	12	221
	% within Newspaper	28.1%	19.9%	15.8%	19.9%	6.3%	4.5%	5.4%	
<b>DNEVNI AVAZ</b>	Count	47	69	31	28	2	2	13	192
	% within Newspaper	24.5%	35.9%	16.1%	14.6%	1.0%	1.0%	6.8%	
<b>GLAS SRPSKE</b>	Count	95	3	9	3	1	1	1	113
	% within Newspaper	84.1%	2.7%	8.0%	2.7%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	
<b>NEZAVISNE NOVINE</b>	Count	44	8	27	30	6	4	10	129
	% within Newspaper	34.1%	6.2%	20.9%	23.3%	4.7%	3.1%	7.8%	
<b>DNEVNI LIST</b>	Count	29	5	12	19	3	0	3	71
	% within Newspaper	40.8%	7.0%	16.9%	26.8%	4.2%	0.0%	4.2%	
<b>VEČERNJI LIST ZG</b>	Count	13	3	6	2	3	1	3	31
	% within Newspaper	41.9%	9.7%	19.4%	6.5%	9.7%	3.2%	9.7%	
<b>VEČERNJE NOVOSTI BG</b>	Count	47	4	22	23	10	11	11	128
	% within Newspaper	36.7%	3.1%	17.2%	18.0%	7.8%	8.6%	8.6%	
<b>OVERAL</b>	Count	337	136	142	149	39	29	53	885

\*Percentages and totals are based on cases

### Category 'Only name'

As for the frequency of using the category 'name only' when speaking about Karadžić, individually, this was the way of naming Karadžić which was used the most (38%), and there is a statistically significant difference among seven analyzed newspapers ( $\chi=88.4$   $p=0.000$ ). Regarding percentages, *Glas Srpske* used this way of naming the most (84 % out of the total number of naming in this newspaper) and *Dnevni avaz* did so the least (25% out of the total naming in Avaz)

Between Sarajevo dailies *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni avaz*, there are no statistically significant differences ( $\chi=1.5$   $p=0.215$ ). When discussing dailies from Serbia and Republika Srpska, the situation is not so equalized. Namely, there is no statistically significant difference between *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=0.1$   $p=0.812$ ), but there is one between these two newspapers and *Glas Srpske* (*Glas Srpske* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=44.1$   $p=0.000$ ). When it comes to 'Croatian newspapers' - *Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Večernji list* from Zagreb, there is no statistically significant difference between the two ( $\chi=0.0$   $p=0.972$ ).

Regarding the differences among three main groups of newspapers based on ethno-national structure of the readership, 'Bosniak newspapers' do not differ significantly from 'Serb' *Večernje novosti* and *Nezavisne novine* (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=3.7$   $p=0.054$ ), but they do differ from *Glas Srpske* (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=61.4$   $p=0.000$ ). Also, newspapers with primarily Bosniak readership are not different than the newspapers oriented towards Croatian ethno-national group (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Večernji list* ( $\chi=2.3$   $p=0.133$ ). 'Croatian newspapers' follow the same pattern of difference, as the Bosniak ones, in comparison to newspapers from Serbia and Republika Srpska, so that they differ from *Glas Srpske* (the difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Večernji list* ( $\chi=20.1$   $p=0.000$ ), but there is no statistically significant difference between 'Croatian

newspapers' and two other 'Serb newspapers' (the difference between *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernji list* ( $\chi=0.2$   $p=0.667$ )).

Therefore, it can be concluded that *Glas Srpske* differs to a great extent from all other newspapers with regard to naming Karadžić in this manner, whereas all the other newspapers are quite equal in using this category of naming.

### Category 'War crimes'

There are statistically significant differences among seven newspapers regarding the frequency of naming Karadžić in connection with war crimes ( $\chi=133.8$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). In analyzed texts, Radovan Karadžić was mentioned 136 times in the context of war crimes. More precisely, Sarajevo dailies put him into this context 113 times (83%) whereas all other newspapers mentioned Karadžić in this context 23 times (17%).

Compared to the other ways of his naming, it seem that mentioning in the context of war crimes is very important for Sarajevo dailies. In *Dnevni avaz* this is the most frequent means of naming (35.9%), whereas in *Oslobodenje* (19.9%) this is the second most frequent means, right after using only his name. Still, it is obvious that *Dnevni avaz* paid much more attention to this way of naming than *Oslobodenje*, hence there are significant differences between these two newspapers ( $\chi=15.3$   $p=0.000$ ). On the other hand, difference between newspapers with primarily Serb readership is not statistically significant (the difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=1.9$ ;  $p=0.170$ )). These newspapers are characterized by a very rare mentioning of Karadžić in the context of war crimes (*Glas Srpske* 2.7% and *Večernje novosti* 3.1%, *Nezavisne novine* 6,2%). Similarly, difference between daily newspapers with primarily Croatian readership, *Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Večernji list* from Zagreb, is not statistically significant ( $\chi=0.2$   $p=0.666$ ).

Regarding the differences between three groups of newspaper, based on ethnic differentiation of readership, it is important to say that 'Serb newspaper' reported

about Karadžić in the context of war crimes slightly less than 'Croatian newspapers' but that there is no statistically significant difference between them ( $\chi=2.5$   $p=0.116$ ). On the other hand, 'Serb newspapers' have statistically significant differences if compared to the 'Bosniak newspapers' which mention Karadžić in the context of war crimes a lot more (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=15.2$   $p=0.000$ ). There are also differences between 'Croatian' and 'Bosniak newspapers'. *Dnevni list* from Mostar is statistically significantly different than both Sarajevo dailies (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Oslobodenje* ( $\chi=8.5$   $p=0.004$ ), whereas *Večernji list* from Zagreb differs from *Dnevni avaz* ( $\chi=12.7$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) but not from *Oslobodenje* ( $\chi=2.9$ ;  $p=0.088$ ).

### **Category 'the Hague tribunal'**

As for reporting on Karadžić in terms of the Hague tribunal, the newspapers were rather close in percentage, without significant differences between them ( $\chi=12.3$   $p=0.056$ ).

### **Category 'Politics'**

There were some variations between the dailies when it came to the treatment of Karadžić's naming in the context of his political role. The differences between seven analyzed newspapers are statistically significant ( $\chi=36.7$   $p=0.000$ ). *Dnevni list* from Mostar mentioned Karadžić in this context the most (26,8%), whereas *Glas Srpske* did so the least (2,7%).

Sarajevo dailies, *Oslobodenje* and *Dnevni avaz*, are not statistically different when it comes to putting Karadžić into the political context ( $\chi=2.7$   $p=0.099$ ). There are differences between newspapers with primarily Serb readership. The position of *Nezavisne novine* from Banjaluka and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade is rather similar

and there is no statistically significant difference between them ( $\chi=1.5$ ;  $p=0.220$ ), but both these newspapers reported on Karadžić a lot more in this context than *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka (the difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=17.9$ ;  $p=0.000$ )). ‘Croatian daily newspapers’ are also different when it comes to connecting Karadžić with politics. *Dnevni list* did this more than *Večernji list* from Zagreb and there is a statistically significant difference between them ( $\chi=5.8$   $p=0.016$ ).

With regard to similarities and differences in referring to political role of Karadžić, the following needs to be said. Dailies read mainly by Bosniaks, *Dnevni avaz* and *Oslobođenje* report a lot more than *Glas Srpske* in this context and there is a statistically significant difference between them (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=16.1$   $p=0.000$ )). On the other hand, the overall share of Sarajevo dailies is rather similar to the share of other two ‘Serb newspapers’ *Nezavisne novine* from Banjaluka and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade, and there is no statistically significant difference between them (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=2.9$ ;  $p=0.087$ )). There are several variations in ‘Croatian newspapers’ as well. *Dnevni list* from Mostar do not differ neither from dailies from Sarajevo, nor from *Nezavisne novine* (Banjaluka) and *Večernje novosti* (Belgrade) (the difference between *Dnevni list* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=1.7$ ;  $p=0.194$ )), but does differ from *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=2.3$ ;  $p=0.086$ ). On the other hand, *Večernji list* from Zagreb does not differ neither from *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=1.3$ ;  $p=0.264$ ) nor from *Večernjih novosti* from Belgrade ( $\chi=2.3$ ;  $p=0.085$ ) in this regard, but differ significantly from both *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=5.6$ ;  $p=0.018$ ) and ‘Bosniak newspapers’ (the difference between *Večernji list* and *Dnevni avaz*  $\chi=7.3$ ;  $p=0.007$ ).

### Category ‘Dragan Dabić’

With regard to the frequency of using the category ‘Dragan Dabić’ there is a statistically significant difference among seven newspapers which we analyzed

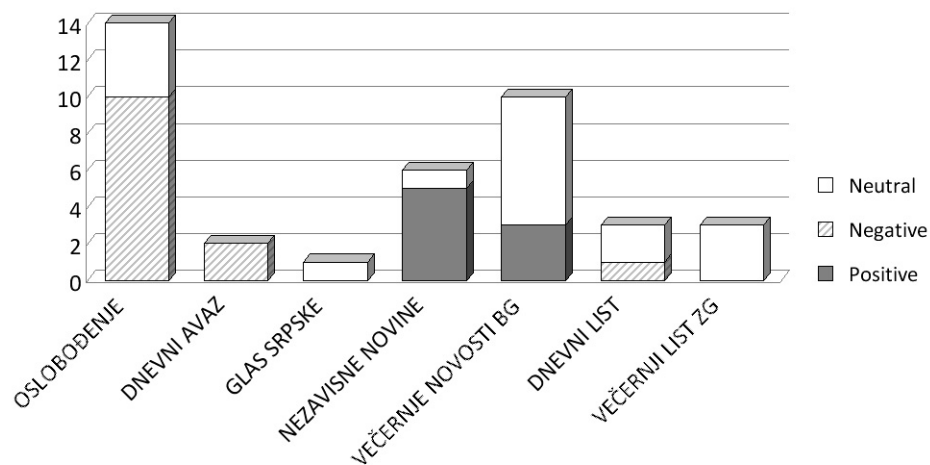
( $\chi=16.1$ ;  $p=0.013$ ). To the greatest extent, *Večernji list* from Zagreb (9.7%) and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade (7.8%) put Karadžić into this context, whereas *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka (0.9%) and *Dnevni avaz* from Sarajevo (1.0%) do so the least.

Bosniak newspapers significantly differ regarding the statistics ( $\chi=8.2$   $p=0.004$ ) and *Oslobodenje* uses this term to a greater extent than *Dnevni avaz*. As for Serb newspapers, there is a difference between *Glas Srpske* which very rarely mentions Karadžić in this context and *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernje novosti* which do this more often (the difference between *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=3.4$ ;  $p=0.047$ ; the difference between *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=0.6$ ;  $p=0.455$ ). ‘Croatian newspapers’ do not have statistically significant differences ( $\chi=1.1$   $p=0.291$ ) although, regarding percentages, *Večernji list* uses the term ‘Dabić’ more often than *Dnevni list* from Mostar.

The differences between groups of newspapers based on ethno-national background and ethnical structure of readership are not unambiguous. This is how Bosniak *Dnevni avaz* does not significantly differ from dailies from Banjaluka regarding the statistics (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=3.7$ ;  $p=0.055$ ), but it significantly differs from *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade ( $\chi=7.2$ ;  $p=0.007$ ). Also, when it comes to statistics *Avaz* is significantly different from ‘Croatian’ *Večernji list*, too ( $\chi=7.3$ ;  $p=0.007$ ) but not from *Dnevni list* from Mostar ( $\chi=2.1$ ;  $p=0.143$ ). The situation is different with *Oslobodenje*. This newspaper differs from *Glas Srpske* ( $\chi=7.6$ ;  $p=0.006$ ), but it does not differ from other ‘Serb newspapers’ (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Nezavisne novine* ( $\chi=0.8$ ;  $p=0.367$ ) and ‘Croatian daily newspapers’ (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Večernji list* ( $\chi=0.9$ ;  $p=0.350$ ). And in the end there are no statistically significant differences between ‘Croatian newspapers’ and *Nezavisne novine* and *Večernje novosti*, the two ‘Serb newspapers’ ( $\chi=0.9$ ;  $p=0.349$ ). However, *Glas Srpske* is significantly different only from *Večernji list* when dealing with statistics ( $\chi=7.6$ ;  $p=0.006$ ) but not from *Dnevni list* from Mostar ( $\chi=2.6$ ;  $p=0.105$ ).

In order to gather more information about the nature of reporting in this case, we analyzed whether the name Dragan Dabić was used in a positive, negative or neutral context. Chart 1 presents the results.

**Graph 1: Context of naming Karadžić as Dragan Dabić (N=39)**



The chart shows that Sarajevo daily newspapers had a very similar pattern of putting the name Dragan Dabić mostly in a negative context and sometimes in a neutral one, while Dabić was never mentioned in a positive context. For example, *Oslobođenje* wrote about Dabić as a quack who harmed people's health.

A quack, swinger and a passenger who dodges fare in a city bus, in January 1992 openly threatened in the parliament of B&H that if Bosnia and Herzegovina used its right guaranteed in the Constitution of the SFRJ, there would be a war. (Hadzic 2008, p. 12)

On the other hand, *Nezavisne novine* from Banja Luka and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade follow a different pattern, where positive and neutral contexts are predominant, with the exception of several articles with a negative valence. *Glas Srpske* from Banja Luka referred to the name Dragan Dabić very rarely, and only in a neutral context. One example of reporting putting Dabić in a positive context, portraying him as a person of free spirit and dedicated to scientific research for the purpose of promoting the welfare of humanity can be seen in the following:

There was no trace of that likeable guru, Dragan David Dabić, 'a researcher in the field of psychiatrics and bio-energy' whose character represented a successful combination of Freud and bohemian from Skadarlija. (N.N. 2008, p. 10)

*Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Večernji list* from Zagreb mostly prefer the neutral contextualization of Karadžić, while positive valence was not detected in any of the articles.

### Category 'Serbs/nation'

In some texts, Karadžić was also mentioned in the context of belonging to the Serb national identity. *Večernje novosti* from Serbia which had the greatest percentage of such texts – 10,9%, and *Dnevni list* from Mostar which did not have such texts at all somewhat stand out among the analyzed dailies. The difference among seven dailies which were analyzed is statistically significant when mentioning Karadžić in the context of his nation ( $\chi=18.3$   $p=0.006$ ).

There are statistically significant differences between Sarajevo dailies and so *Oslobodenje* put Karadžić into this context more times than *Dnevni avaz* ( $\chi=4.7$ ;  $p=0.030$ ). As for the newspapers categorized as 'Serb' ones, there are differences

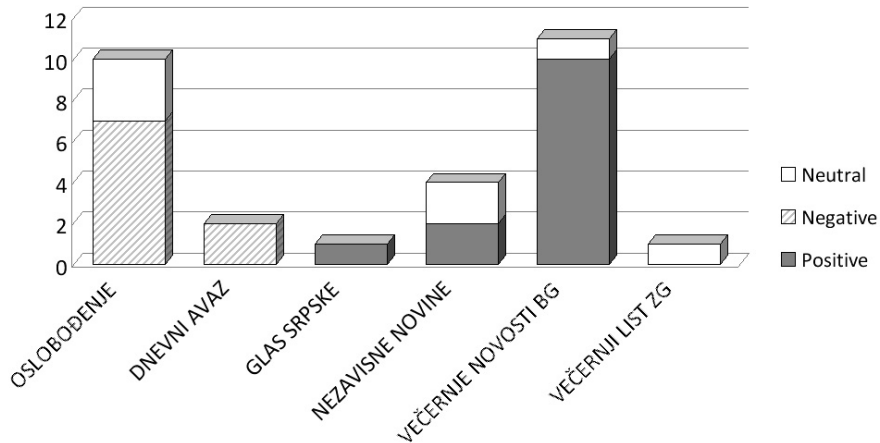


between *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade ( $\chi=7.9$   $p=0.005$ ). Between ‘Croatian newspapers’ there is no statistically significant difference in this regard ( $\chi=2.3$   $p=0.131$ ).

*Oslobodenje* from Sarajevo statistically more puts Karadžić into the context of a nation than *Glas Srpske* from Banjaluka ( $\chi=4.7$ ;  $p=0.030$ ), but the differences between this newspaper and ‘Serb’ *Večernje novosti* and *Nezavisne novine* are not statistically significant (the difference between *Oslobodenje* and *Večernje novosti* ( $\chi=0.9$   $p=0.350$ ). On the other hand, the share of this newspaper is statistically rather different from *Dnevni list* from Mostar, as *Oslobodenje* puts Karadžić into the context of a nation more ( $\chi=4.1$   $p=0.043$ ), but it is not different from the other ‘Croatian newspaper’ – *Večernji list* from Zagreb ( $\chi=0.3$   $p=0.582$ ). *Dnevni avaz* from Sarajevo is again different only from *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade as it puts Karadžić statistically less into the context of a nation ( $\chi=8.5$   $p=0.004$ ), whereas the difference from all other newspapers is not statistically significant (the difference between *Dnevni avaz* and *Večernji list* ( $\chi=0.7$   $p=0.416$ ). The difference between ‘Serb’ and ‘Croatian’ newspapers is not unambiguous either and it can be found in fact only between *Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade ( $\chi=6.2$ ;  $p=0.013$ ). As it was said before, *Dnevni list* did not publish a single text connecting Karadžić with his nation.

Further analysts of the context, in the sense whether newspapers put Karadžić into positive, negative or neutral context enables us to observe the additional nuances of reporting.

Graph 2: Naming of Karadžić in the context of Nation (N=29)



Sarajevo daily newspapers again follow a pattern of predominantly negative valence in presenting Karadžić in the context of his nationality. This is how *Oslobodenje* reminds us about Karadžić's wartime nationalist rhetoric:

Karadžić imposed himself on Serbs quickly with his strong advocacy of war which sounded like nonsense (...) only two months after the massacre of Bosniaks in Srebrenica, with an incredible wickedness he said: 'Srebrenica is news, but Srebrenica is the proof of the superiority of Serbian weapons and an example of Serbian generosity. (Berić 2008, p.10)

On the other side are the media from Banja Luka and Belgrade, which employ a positive valence of representation of Karadžić in terms of his national identity and role. Even if Karadžić's flaws were mentioned in *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade they

are interpreted in terms of the national traits of naïveté and ‘faith.’ These kinds of characteristics were used with an effect of representing the Serb nation as a victimized subject who suffered much throughout history.

He was not an exception when it comes to gullibility, that innate characteristic of Serb people. (Jovanović 2009, p. 19)

*Dnevni list* from Mostar did not mention Karadžić in this context and *Večernji list* from Zagreb very rarely related Karadžić to his nationality, and when it did it did not mention him in a positive context.

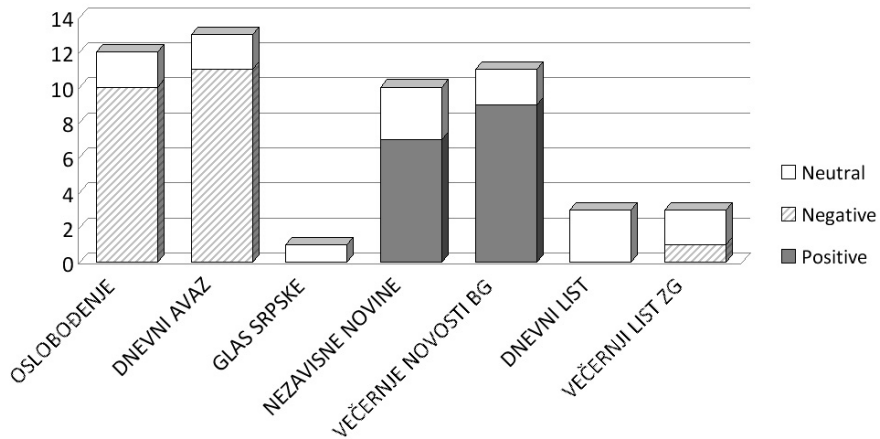
On Monday NATO declared that the report on the arrest of the accused for war crimes, Bosnian Serb Radovan Karadžić, is long awaited good news (Haško tužiteljstvo i EU pozdravljaju uhićenje 2008).

### **Category ‘Other personal characteristics’**

In the end, among the articles that were analyzed, Karadžić was rarely referred to in terms of his other personal characteristics and there is no significant difference between the seven newspapers ( $\chi=11.2$   $p=0.083$ ). The percentages of this kind of naming vary from 0.9% (*Glas Srpske*) to 9.7% (*Večernji list*).

With regard to the valence of presenting Karadžić within this naming category, the findings are presented in the following chart.

**Graph 3: Naming Karadžić in the context of other personal characteristics (N=53)**



Again, the pattern of Sarajevo dailies is almost the same and involves a predominantly negative valence of presenting Karadžić in the context of his personal characteristics, with some articles involving neutral valence as well. *Oslobodenje* wrote:

It is difficult to resist the need, almost a physiological need, to write something about the arrest of the slayer from Durmitor, the murderer, the person who ruined homes, the monster and about his appearance at the Hague tribunal (...) The most important thing is that the long wanted criminal was brought to justice and television viewers could clearly see how the former monster's face and appearance, healing masks and epic boasting suddenly came down to the half-aware face of a tidy peasant and coward in front of the cold face of judge Alphons Orié (Hajdarevic 2008. p. 10)

Nezavisne novine from Banja Luka and *Večernje novosti* from Belgrade belong to the second group of newspapers, characterized primarily by a positive valence towards Karadžić in the context of his personal characteristics, with few articles involving a negative or neutral valence. It is difficult to put *Glas Srpske* from Banja Luka into this group or into any of these groups because it published only one text referring to Karadžić's personal characteristics. This is how in *Nezavisne novine* we find a glorification of Karadžić's almost surreal abilities.

Radovan showed the ability to lead his people and the ability to find his way in impossible situations by hiding for 12 years. This shows what kind of a man we are talking about, a man with power and the ability to manage everything. (Popovic 2008, p. 4)

In a different article, *Nezavisne* reported on Karadžić's demand for help from legal experts in the course of the ICTY proceedings. However, the following quote portrays Karadžić in a positive light, as a person whose traits of rationality and respectfulness prove that he is capable to defend himself in the courtroom.

Doctor Karadžić wants a fair trial where he would be able to defend himself. He already showed that he behaves according to the rules and that he is polite. He is willing to express himself rationally, concisely and with respect when it comes to the interventions in the court room, to the appeals before the search, towards everyone involved in the process and towards the witnesses. Insisting on representing himself he admits that, in order to defend himself professionally, he needs help from legal professionals Karadžić states in his appeal. (Srna 2008)

In the end, *Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Večernji list* from Zagreb belong to the third category which is characterized mostly by mention of Karadžić's personal traits in a neutral context.

## Concluding remarks

The initial hypothesis of this analysis was that there are strong indicators of ethno-national divisions among the dailies analyzed, especially when cases of high ethno-national relevance, such as the Karadžić case, are reported on. We consider such divisions to be symptomatic of a nationalistic/patriotic type of journalism, which has been a characteristic feature of journalism in the region during the turmoil decades behind us. However, we did not expect obvious infringements of professional norms as a result, but expected more subtle indicators of patriotic journalism, such as the prominence of articles on ethnically relevant issues, a symptomatic reference manner and valences in the media representations of Karadžić.

The findings of content analysis supported the initial hypothesis insofar as they confirmed that newsworthiness attributed to the Karadžić case in five dailies analyzed from Bosnia and Herzegovina varied to a certain extent, depending on whether the media is based in Sarajevo, Banja Luka or Mostar.

The two dailies based in Sarajevo followed a similar pattern of reporting on the Karadžić case, and had clearly the highest number of articles on Karadžić, the highest proportion of articles on the front page, the highest proportion of articles with a size that exceeded 1/6 of a newspaper page, and a relatively high proportion of articles that included photographs. Similarly, the Karadžić case receives a lot of attention and is highly prominent in the rhetoric of Bosniak political elites. Dailies based in Banja Luka mostly differed from those in Sarajevo in the prominence of articles, with all of the listed indicators of prominence being lower than those in Sarajevo dailies. Therefore, the overall prominence of the case in Banja Luka dailies, being lower than

those from Sarajevo, relatively corresponds with the fact that Serb political leadership have a complicated relation to the case, with two major identifiable streams. The prominence of the Karadžić case in *Glas Srpske* was especially low, which possibly derives from lack of readiness to thematize the case and its implications for B&H society and for the Serb nation in a substantial manner that can be identified among Serb national parties that still affiliate themselves with Radovan Karadžić and his legacy. The representatives of the other stream of Serb political elites distance themselves from Karadžić, but mostly frame the case in the context of the need for cooperation with international courts, while the crimes are actually rarely spoken of, or are relativized through claims that crimes were committed on every side during the war. *Nezavisne novine* did not differ highly or straightforwardly from Sarajevo dailies in all indicators of prominence, especially when it came to the proportion of articles on the front page. Therefore, the policy of the editorial staff of this newspaper possibly coincides with the second stream, and demonstrates more readiness to distance itself from Karadžić and to thematize the case and its implications. *Dnevni list* from Mostar paid little attention to the case, without signs of serious journalistic engagement. This is also in line with the treatment of the case by Croatian political leadership. Neither *Dnevni list* nor Croatian political elites perceive this topic as crucial in their editorial or political agendas, respectively.

In sum, the differences on the level of the prominence of the Karadžić case coincide with the disparity between political discourses of ethno-national elites to a great extent. Since articles on EU integration showed different patterns of prominence, the differences found between dailies from Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar in reporting on Karadžić can be attributed to differences in ideological positions, the attitudes of political elites, as well as the attitudes of fragmented media audiences.

The findings of semantic analysis additionally support the hypothesis on the ethnic pattern of reporting to a certain extent. Dailies from Sarajevo, for example, reported

on the case while emphasizing Karadžić's role in war crimes, while the Banja Luka dailies represented Karadžić in this context far less often. This also demonstrates that the apprehensions of the Karadžić case, and possibly of war crimes and accountability related issues, differ from apprehensions suggested by the naming practices in Sarajevo dailies.

The differences in frequency of other naming practices were not as straightforward. Although *Glas Srpske* showed congruency with Serb political elites in B&H in terms of their infrequency in naming Karadžić in the context of his role in the Hague proceedings and in the context of his politics, *Nezavisne novine* named Karadžić much more within these two semantic fields, even more than the Sarajevo dailies did. However, Karadžić was represented mostly in a positive or neutral light in *Nezavisne novine*, whether mentioned as Dragan Dabić, in the context of his personal characteristics, or in the context of his nation. Positive and neutral valences of representation were predominant in *Večernje novosti* as well. *Glas Srpske* rarely referred to Dragan Dabić, to Karadžić's personal characteristics or nationality, and even then the valence was mostly neutral. Furthermore, *Glas Srpske* seems to have used particularly the strategies of neutral positioning towards Karadžić, by dominantly addressing Karadžić by name only and differing from all other newspapers in that regard. Although, it can be assumed that the neutrality of such representations is an indicator of a departure from patriotic journalism at *Glas Srpske*, such an assumption is difficult to sustain keeping in mind the strategy of this newspaper to give very low prominence to articles about Karadžić, although the case is characterized by features that fit into accepted news qualities such as frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, personalization, reference to elite persons, etc. (Galtung and Ruge 1965). It is more likely that this neutrality represents a reflection of 'objectivity' that Tuchman (1972) conceptualized as the strategic rituals aimed to counter potential criticism. Mainly, an open patriotic stance and positive representations of Karadžić are likely to be exposed to criticism based either on advocating journalistic values or on international law postulates.



*Dnevni list* from Mostar and *Vječernji list* from Zagreb mostly prefer the neutral contextualization of Karadžić, while positive valence was not detected in any of the articles. The naming of Karadžić in these two newspapers is not as hot an issue as in Sarajevo media, where there is mostly a neutral attitude with a few cases of naming in a negative context.

In sum, the valences of reporting on Karadžić offered additional insights on representation practices that can be indicative of the perseverance of patriotic journalism. Findings suggest that simple matrices are often employed: (1) on the one hand, Sarajevo dailies name Karadžić as a perpetrator before he is actually sentenced, as well as using the case as an instrument for questioning the existence of the Republika Srpska (2) on the other, Banja Luka and Belgrade dailies who avoid any judgments on war crimes committed in the name of their own ethnicity, and avoid political contextualization that could endanger the dominant politics of one ethnicity, and (3) lastly, Mostar and Zagreb dailies treat the case as mostly irrelevant, since it carries little relevance for national politics of the third ethnicity.

In the previous years there has been debate over whether journalists are entitled to make judgments about Karadžić and his role in war crimes, or whether they should be as neutral as with any of the accused before the ruling is made. The Press Council in B&H pointed a finger at all violations of the Press Code, Article 10, which stipulates that print media will not name one person a criminal before the court ruling. In other words, journalists are required not to make judgments about whether the person is guilty or not and are required not to attribute any biased words or phrases. Part of the press community supported the stance that Karadžić, just as any other accused, should be protected from premature judgments made by journalists. On the other hand, part of the press community pointed out the moral obligation of journalists to approach issues of traumatic experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina with sensitivity that goes beyond journalistic professional values, and advocated that Karadžić should be excepted from

protection under Article 10. It was emphasized that the crimes Karadžić is accused of indisputably happened while he was the political and military leader of the army of Bosnian Serbs, and that this fact justifies more straightforward attitudes towards Karadžić. The editor of *Oslobodjenja* from Sarajevo openly stated that she is ready to break the Code in the case of Karadžić:

A long time ago, I spoke publicly and said that I will consciously break the Code any time I am expected to call Radovan Karadžić a suspect, and I am prepared to testify that he is a criminal, too. (Selimbegović 2009, p. 10).

In an attempt to explain why the symbiosis between media and political discourses exists, we made a reference to the concept of 'partitocrazia' (Jakubowicz 2008) suggesting that in all post-communist countries, and so in B&H as well, there is a unique usurpation of public discourse by politicians and so the contemplation of social issues regularly appear in the context of dominant political discourses. Additionally, strong connections between the worlds of journalism and politics are at the forefront in B&H, similar to the parallelism characteristic of the Mediterranean polarized-pluralist model of media described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Despite a legal and regulatory framework that guarantees the freedom and independence of media within B&H, political parallelism is perceived to be a common feature of the media system. Media are therefore under the strong influence of national political parties that have monopolized public life in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the nineties. There are studies (Hodžić 2010, Udovičić 2010) that suggest that most of the media favor certain political options, advocate for these interests and reflect the attitudes of certain political parties. Furthermore, the media system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is specific insofar as political parallelism is not limited simply to the promotion of a certain political orientation, but also involves the acceptance and reproduction of interpretative frameworks based on ethno-national differentiation. This can have especially harsh consequences, since the insight of the public into war crimes is an issue of high relevance for understanding their past and envisioning the

future of B&H. The findings of our research indeed show that there is evident political polarization in reporting on the Karadžić case, not only in terms of prominence, and naming practices, but also in the explicit valence of the representation of Karadžić.

We can hypothesize that journalists come to employ dominant ethno-ideological frameworks as a result of different kind of pressures by political and economic actors, through conformism strategies and self-censorship practices, as well as through embracing the ‘correct’ interpretation of events based on ethnic belonging (Zendberg and Neigher 2005) on the level of internalized values that journalists themselves believe in. Still, in order to study the actual mechanisms of interaction of political and media discourse, it is necessary to conduct further research that would include studying news sources – that is, the way in which they affect news production. We hope that this study, based primarily on the analysis of media content, will provide a good starting point for such research.

In the end, the findings of our research which show the differences between dailies from three cities in B&H can be interpreted best in terms of the concept of spheres of consensus (Hallin 1994). Namely, the issues related to the Karadžić case seem to be presented within the sphere of both political ‘consensus’ (on an intra-ethnic level) and within the sphere of ‘beyond legitimate controversy’ (on the inter-ethnic level). The consensus of political elites within each ethnic community on Karadžić is clearly reflected in similar patterns of reporting, and especially in the valence of representations of Karadžić. On the other hand, controversies and different apprehensions regarding the accused, the victims, accountability, and political implications, etc., are rarely represented in media content in a substantial and unbiased manner. Opposing apprehensions dominant in the ‘other’ ethnic communities are regularly underrepresented. The media sphere is still obviously divided when it comes to representations of issues over which ethno-political elites

have mutually differing attitudes. Although a solid regulatory and legal framework for media has already been developed, the results suggest that B&H media still nurture patriotic practices in reporting on issues related to war crimes.

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**THE BILJANA PLAVŠIĆ CASE:  
NATIONALIST AND GENDER NARRATIVES IN  
THE SERVICE OF MEDIA (NON)REPORTING ON  
THE PLAVŠIĆ CASE IN SERBIA AND BOSNIA AND  
HERZEGOVINA (THE REPUBLIKA SRPSKA)**

## Introduction

After eight years and nine months in prison, having served two-thirds of her 11-year-long prison sentence, Biljana Plavšić, previously indicted by the Hague for crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was granted early release on October 27, 2009. The release of Biljana Plavšić was prime news in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and her subsequent landing in Belgrade and first days of freedom were reported on in several journalistic genres, ranging from press clipping to cover story. The appearance of Biljana Plavšić at the Belgrade airport stirred great interest among journalists, whose reports, in addition to detailed information on the brands of airplanes and automobiles Plavšić was transported in from prison and the culinary abilities of her sister-in-law and Plavšić herself, occasionally offered an analysis or two of the role of Biljana Plavšić in the bloody history of the Yugoslav wars. Only in the rare article mainly in alternative media (e.g. *E-novine*) were we able to find out which crimes Plavšić was prosecuted for, what and how she thought during the war years, and what the consequences of her actions were. Crimes took a backseat in the majority of media reports in favor of a narrative of Biljana Plavšić constructed from two angles: ethnic affiliation and gender identity. Through the story of Biljana Plavšić the media attempted not only to reconstruct her image, but also to position the national and gender identities of the audiences for which the media reports were intended. Nationalist and gender myths and narratives intermingled and complemented one another, and with the help of sensationalist details, contributed to obfuscating and neglecting the real role and responsibility of Biljana Plavšić in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The goal of this research is to attempt to elucidate via an analysis of the media in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Republika Srpska) the media strategy of (non) reporting on war crimes by mapping narratives characteristic of national ideology and gender stereotypes. The first portion of this work presents the historical background of the Plavšić case as well as methodological and theoretical observations, and the second portion comprises an analysis of the media representation of the Plavšić case, which we divide into three periods: from radical nationalism to pro-Western democracy (1990-1998); the surrender to the Hague Tribunal, the confession, the sentence, and term in prison (2000-2003); and the release from prison and first days of freedom (2008-2009).

Through a discursive analysis of texts on the case of Biljana Plavšić in different media in Serbia and BiH (Republika Srpska) we have attempted to answer questions of the mutual links between the construction of the Biljana Plavšić character and the socio-political environment in which media representation takes place: In what ways do the media participate in creating the different identities of the Biljana Plavšić character? How are media appearances of Biljana Plavšić ‘staged’?<sup>1</sup> What are the gender and nationalist myths, stereotypes, and narratives that the media exploits as source material for representations of the Biljana Plavšić character? Concerning the last, we particularly consider media usage of gender-marked discourses and their inscription into nationalist ideology.

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<sup>1</sup> In his analysis of the ‘contemporary myth of the new leader,’ Mitja Velikonja (2003) notes that he or she no longer appears in a pure form, ‘but increasingly in the form of individual elements, tendencies, or fragments.’ He cites the example of the Austrian politician Jorg Haider, who was presented ‘through different characters, ‘staging,’ most importantly as Robin Hood, an athlete, a beer-tent socialist, and he who surpasses the past and class society (Ottomeyer 2000)’ (Velikonja 2003, p. 25).

## Historical Context

Biljana Plavšić is the only woman indicted and sentenced for war crimes by the Hague Tribunal. The indictment was issued on April 7, 2000, and Plavšić voluntarily surrendered on January 10, 2001. On October 2, 2002 she pleaded guilty to Count 3 of the indictment, and was sentenced to 11 years in prison on October 27, 2003. Biljana Plavšić participated in ‘a crime of the utmost gravity, involving a campaign of ethnic separation [,] which resulted in the deaths of thousands and the expulsion of thousands more in circumstances of great brutality,’ states the judgment. She was granted early release on October 27, 2009, having served two thirds of the 11-year-long prison sentence.

The indictment charged Biljana Plavšić with several counts of genocide, complicity in genocide, as well as crimes against humanity: persecutions, extermination and murder, deportation, and inhumane acts. After she pleaded guilty to Count 3 of the indictment for persecutions and crimes against humanity, the Prosecutor moved to dismiss the remaining counts of the indictment. Count 3 states that during the time from July 1, 1991 to December 30, 1992 the accused, ‘acting individually and in concert with others in a joint criminal enterprise, planned, instigated, ordered and aided and abetted persecutions of the Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Croat and other non-Serb populations of 37 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.’<sup>2</sup>

Biljana Plavšić was born in 1930 in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She was a Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Sarajevo.

In July 1990, she joined the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska demokratska stranka*, SDS). She was elected the Serb Representative to the Presidency of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 1990 and remained in this position until December 1992. She was active in the Presidency of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then became a member of the collective and expanded Presidency of the Republika Srpska (RS). In September 1996, due to certain pressures, Radovan Karadžić resigned the office of President of the RS and relegated all his authority to Plavšić. The same year, Plavšić was elected the President of the RS, an office she held until 1998. Her membership in the SDS was revoked in July 1997, after which she founded her own party, the Serb People's Alliance (*Srpski narodni savez*, SNZ). In mid-December 2000 she resigned her post as Member of Parliament of the RS. The second period of her political engagement was marked by cooperation with the international community.

Her entry of a plea of guilty, or her rehabilitation and acceptance of responsibility, is cited as one of the reasons for her early release.

## Gender and Nationalism

Nationalist and war discourses and practices are based on a strict gender-based division of roles and narratives.<sup>3</sup> While real men are expected to become warriors and

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<sup>3</sup> A sizable number of comprehensive studies observe the intertwinedness and mutual influences of gender and nation in the area of the former Yugoslavia from a theoretical and/or activist viewpoint: Slapšak 1996, 2000, Verdery 1996, pp. 61-82, Papić 2002, Zajović 2002, Blagojević 1995, Žarkov 1995, 2007, Mihelj 2011, etc.

guardians of their respective nations, women are expected to assume one of several roles, which ensure ‘the cultural and biological reproduction of the nation-state’ (Yuval-Davis 1997). The man must be a courageous warrior willing to expose himself to all sorts of danger, and ‘the measure of [his] courage corresponds to the measure of manliness’ (Čolović 1996). The woman is assigned the role of woman-girl, who awaits her warrior’s return from war,<sup>4</sup> the role of sister or mother,<sup>5</sup> with an insistence on features of patriotism, moral purity, enthusiasm, and willingness to sacrifice.

One of the central roles of the woman in nationalist discourse concerns her reproductive function. In the nationalist key the woman is the reproducer of the nation, responsible for the biological survival and ‘purity of the nation,’ charged with preserving morality and family, as well as traditional values. One of the basic demands put forth to the woman is to ‘bestow’ to the nation as many children as possible – members of the nation – while, on the other hand, birthing by another nation is considered the utmost danger and the strongest ‘weapon’ of the adversary (Drezgic 2000).

The second significant place in nationalist ideology that is dominantly assigned as belonging to the woman is the role of the victim. Particularly the victimized female body plays a central part in nationalist discourses. As Dubravka Žarkov argues: ‘Its vulnerability, its powerlessness, and its need for protection have inspired and justified

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<sup>4</sup> The Glasgow Media Group’s analyses of British media reports on the war in the Falkland Islands show that women are exclusively represented as the mothers, sisters, and wives of British soldiers, awaiting their return from war. Glasgow Media Group, Routledge, London, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> In her analysis of elementary school textbooks in Serbia, Isidora Jarić proves that ‘nearly all social roles of women characters may be reduced to the patterns of two common mythic characters from the Serbian epic tradition ... the Jugović Mother and the Kosovar Girl.’ Isidora Jarić 2000, p. 262.

many a nationalist project' (Žarkov 2007, p. 85). The woman as victim is the central topic of a substantial amount of activist and theoretical research projects, including feminist studies. On the other hand, they indicate an additional gender-marked role opposite to the woman-victim – the woman-activist, the peacemaker. Women's pacifism and anti-war and anti-violence alliances in the area of the former Yugoslavia are the topic of numerous studies (Slapšak 1996, 2000, Liht and Drakulić 1996, Iveković 1996, Papić 2002, Zajović 2002, etc.).

However, the role of the woman not as a victim of violence or an anti-war activist, but rather a perpetrator of violence and participant in violence has not provoked the attention it deserves within feminist research. Thus comprehensive research on the only woman from the area of the former Yugoslavia sentenced for war crimes has yet to appear, although there exist sporadic research articles on the role of woman soldiers in the Yugoslav wars. Čolović believes that the character of the young and attractive uniformed woman is thus often depicted with accentuated sexual features in order to mobilize men by portraying war as an 'adventure that may possess a more piquant side to it, owing precisely to the presence of young and handsome women-warriors' (Čolović 1996). On the other hand, as shown by Žarkov in examples from the Croatian media during the 1990s, sexuality is discreet and never at the forefront in media portrayals of Croatian woman soldiers (Žarkov 2007, pp. 192-196). What is insisted on are their emotionality and beauty, classical elements in the discourse of femininity, as well as their skills as housewives. The Serbian media of the early 1990s, concludes Žarkov, likewise portray woman soldiers through principles of love, loyalty, and sacrifice for the homeland and the people, but in an 'archaic, poetic and epic language' (Žarkov 2007, p. 204). In both cases, however, the nationalist narrative is confronted by the problem of harmonizing and reconciling female traits with the traits of the soldier (Žarkov 2007, p. 211).

In his essay on the 'sex identity of the warrior,' Čolović reminds of the 'ancient motif of the dual sex identity of the warrior, with the body and valiance of a man, but the



psyche and soul of a girl.’ Further developing his analysis of the motif, Čolović concludes that ‘the warrior’s ‘girl-like soul’ is a metaphor for sexual purity, immaculacy, and complete dedication to a sublime eros far removed from banal soldierly debauchery.’<sup>6</sup> The matter in question is really the ‘sexual innocence and purity’ of the soldier, who surrenders his sexuality in order to be able to devote himself to ‘other activities of more worth to the collective’ (*Ibid.*). It is precisely the elements of the ‘girl-like soul’ and ‘sexual innocence and purity’ that open up the narrative space for the woman-warrior. ‘The befitting warriorress’ is only she who is ‘able to act like a man and feel like a woman,’<sup>7</sup> and is in this sense made equal to the warrior with a ‘girl-like soul.’ Apart from this, her sexual self-restraint, or virginity, is the chief attribute of the warriorress, like in the case of Joan of Arc. ‘She is not merely the valiant warriorress, but above all the warrior-virgin: La Pucelle d’Orléans’ (Čolović 1996).

What are the roles and features that a woman-warrior must fulfill to find her place in the nationalist narrative? Does the nationalist imagination accept the woman-warrior and under what terms? Obviously, women may be found on the other side, advocating for and committing acts of violence and war. The issue is whether and how nationalist discourses reach beyond the narrative model of determined gender roles prescribed by the nationalist narrative, or whether these are absorbed and revitalized through ‘exceptions’ to normative nationalist and gender discourses. In her study on gender, war, and ethnicity, Žarkov discusses the lack of theoretical concepts and empirical research on cases in which women are the perpetrators of violence and participants in violence (Žarkov 2007). She polemicalizes with the feminist lack of interest in women criminals insisting that there is an unjust invisibility of women war-crime perpetrators in feminist literature. Writing on women in the wars in Rwanda and the Balkans, Žarkov

<sup>6</sup> Čolović 1996, <<http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika/arhiva/96/145/145-15.html>>.

<sup>7</sup> Shepard 1991, qtd. in: Jambrešič Kirin, R and Senjković, R, Lecture at ISH, Ljubljana, 2002.

notes that in both cases women participated in the violence, but that they continue to be observed through the lens of victimization. Žarkov reminds that Catholic nuns in Rwanda are in the dock on accusations of crimes, but fails to mention Biljana Plavšić, who had by then served her prison sentence for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia for some time (Žarkov 2007, pp. 224-225).

## Methodology

This research is based on a discursive analysis of media texts and elements of narrative analysis. Narrative processes, as a requisite part of mass media, contribute to the production of collective notions, narratives, and meanings. Seeking for an answer to the question of how media narratives are formed and what meanings they offer to the public simultaneously clears the path for research on the media's ideological mechanisms, which force certain values and beliefs while marginalizing others. Every story is told from a certain perspective. Narration inevitably implies the 'selection of some signifiers over others and their combination into certain patterns' (Thwaites et al. 1994, p. 127). Thus one of the tasks of narrative analysis of media texts is 'to examine the ways in which they set (up) certain patterns of meaning' (*Ibid* 112). What matters for narrative structure is as follows: (1) character construction (a character is in fact a combination of signs and presupposes the employment of conventions, which reproduce stereotypes, and so a character is attributed with social values considered acceptable within a given community),<sup>8</sup> (2) and sequential events, with an obligatory

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<sup>8</sup> 'Stereotyped characterization frequently works together with a conventional narrative structure to denote and reinforce dominant cultural attitudes and beliefs' (*Ibid* 127).

beginning, middle (climax), and end (resolution).<sup>9</sup> Narrative structure is certainly closely tied to cultural myths, and we shall particularly be interested in national and gender myths and their usage and roles in media reporting.

Media narration is constituted by different discourses of reporting. According to Norman Fairclough's concept of media discourse, the analysis 'of any particular type of discourse, including media discourse, involves an alternation between twin, complementary focuses[:] communicative events [and] the order of discourse' (Fairclough 1995, p. 56). Thus a communicative event ought to be analyzed from a particular, special viewpoint, while on the other hand analyses of the order of discourse ought to be conducted with regard to its intermingling with broader social and cultural discourses. Within his concept of communicative event analysis, Fairclough introduces three characteristic dimensions. These are text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Text signifies any media text, written or spoken.<sup>10</sup> Discursive practice signifies, according to Fairclough, the production and reception of media text where discursive practice acts as mediator between the textual and the cultural, between text and sociocultural practice. Sociocultural practice involves the economic, political, and cultural conditions under which the communicative event takes place.

The analysis of media reports on the case of Biljana Plavšić is based on a discursive analysis of media content and narrative elements. It deals with research on lexical

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<sup>9</sup> Within the framework of master narratives, there are possibilities for secondary narratives, 'narratives within narratives,' as well as critical, subversive narrative readings by certain readers, or their refusal of the narrator's call to partake in the story.

<sup>10</sup> Fairclough sees text as a multifunctional structure that simultaneously comprises three main functional categories: the idea function – constituting systems of knowledge and beliefs, the interpersonal function – constituting social relations and identities, and the textual function. Thus representation, relation, and identity have major roles in analyzing the text of media discourse.

choice (attributes, superlatives) employed in descriptions of Biljana Plavšić during each of the aforementioned periods, research on deictic expressions, the usage of ‘I’ and ‘we’ discourses, and various types of narrative voice and iconography. We are interested in how and by which discursive means different identities and roles assigned to Biljana Plavšić by media reports on the case are constructed. In other words, how and in what manner gender is positioned in relation to the nation and war in media discourse.

The sample comprises randomly chosen articles mentioning Biljana Plavšić, and the examination periods are bound to main events as the backbones of media representation.

The research covers three sequences in the media narrative on Biljana Plavšić, i.e. three periods that, in addition to characteristic events, are additionally marked by the identity transformations of the main character. We are particularly interested in the manner in which the media participate in the creation of different identities of the Biljana Plavšić character, and consequently the intermingling of gender and nationalist discourses.

The analyzed media from BiH (the Republika Srpska) are *Glas Srpske* and *Nezavisne novine*. The media from Serbia covered by the analysis are the daily newspapers *Blic*, *Novosti*, *Politika*, *Kurir*, *Alo*, *Press*, the weekly *Vreme*, the internet site *B92*, and the portal *E-novine*.

## From Radical Nationalism to Pro-Western Democracy (1990-1998)

During the war in BiH, Biljana Plavšić was the Vice-President of the Republika Srpska and one of the leaders of the Serb Democratic Party. The media often described Biljana Plavšić with attributes such as the ‘queen,’ ‘empress,’ and ‘the iron lady.’

‘A ‘hard-liner’ symbol in the Pale leadership, Biljana Plavšić ... herself announced she would govern as the ‘iron lady’ of the RS’ (Štavljanin 1996, p. 18-19). Radicalism was accentuated as her basic character trait not only by the choice of attributes, but also by comparison with nationalist leaders – men. ‘Even the leader of the radicals, Vojislav Šešelj, purported that ‘her positions are very extreme,’ which is why she was called the Serb queen’ (T. N. Đ., Ž. J., N. V., 2009, p. 4). During this period, her radicalism, enthusiasm, adamancy, and ‘male strut’ are insisted on. ‘She was once considered the iron lady of the Serb national movement.’ ‘On a quest to accomplish strategic Serb goals she carried herself with a male strut. She stood side by side with leaders, and perhaps even found her way into some guslar’s<sup>11</sup> epics’ (Stojadinović 2002). If we remember Shepar’s conclusion that a warriorress must act as a man, we may conclude that the Biljana Plavšić’s ‘male strut’ fits into the normative place reserved in the nationalist imagination for woman-warriors.

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<sup>11</sup> An individual performing and composing traditional Serb epic poems about heroes and historical events on a stringed instrument made of maple wood, or *gusle* (translator’s note).

At the same time, the media questions her influence during the war years. In an article published in *MIN* prior to the issuing of the indictment from The Hague, Biljana Plavšić is described as notorious for her ‘radical statements,’ but as essentially having no significant function. ‘During the war, she dealt with humanitarian affairs in the function of Vice-President of the RS[.] Momčilo Mandić, a high-ranking official in the RS police, sees her role thus: ‘She is merely a professor in politics. While the situation in Bosnia was at a boiling point, she was *chaperoning* Linda Karadorđević to monasteries’ (Mitrinović 2001). The media story introduces another woman without any real influence and power, Linda Karadorđević, and so contrasts the drama of the war context with the socializing and travels of women, or as is stated, ‘chaperoning.’

Therefore, the minimization of Biljana Plavšić’s power and responsibility is based on a gender-marked discourse that, owing to her sex, enables the interpretation of her role as less important and negligible.

Additionally, as part of the narrative on her marginal role the media forms another dominant discourse and inscribes it into the myth of the woman as aide. After the war in BiH, Biljana Plavšić severed her ties with the hard core of the Serb Democratic Party and soon after appeared in the media as a collaborator with the West, or the alternative to Radovan Karadžić and Momčilo Krajišnik. *Nezavisne novine* writes that Biljana Plavšić is ‘the woman who practically initiated the process of democratic change in the Republika Srpska’ (*Nezavisne novine*, January 13, 1999).

During the first phase of the narrative on Biljana Plavšić, which concerns her role in the war, the media presents her as the aide of nationalist leaders, while in the second phase of her break-up with the said leaders, she becomes an aide of the West. The conclusion arising from this narrative model is that she had had ‘no influence,’ or that ‘her role was minimal.’

Thus the identity of Biljana Plavšić is represented in the media within the framework of a gender-marked triad: a woman preoccupied by trivial pursuits during a time of war ('chaperoning' her girl-friend to monasteries), the aide (of nationalist leaders, of the West), and the dauntless warrior-virgin. The latter identity frequently appears in regional as well as foreign media with a mocking overtone ('the Serb Joan d'Arc').

## Surrender to the Hague Tribunal, Confession, Sentence, and Term in Prison (2000-2003)

Biljana Plavšić surrendered to the Hague Tribunal on January 10, 2001. The Trial Chamber granted her provisional release until the start of the trial. After initially pleading not guilty on all nine counts of the indictment against her in January 2001, in October 2002 she pleaded guilty to Count 3 of the indictment for persecutions on political, racial, and religious grounds, a crime against humanity. The prosecution moved to dismiss the remaining counts of the indictment, and she was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

*a. An example of female bravery.* The majority of the media in Serbia covered Biljana Plavšić's confession with a certain enthusiasm, expressing hopes that it would clear the path for reconciliation in the region. This refers primarily to media considered civil-oriented, moderate, and democratic, such as, for example, the TV/radio/internet portal B92 (B9 2002). Politika also displayed occasional enthusiasm with regard to reconciliation in the region and the honesty of Plavšić's confession and remorse, although this is mostly found in articles from other media cited in Politika, e.g.: 'She has, which is so unusual, expressed absolute and unconditional remorse for her

crimes against humanity and called on other leaders to re-examine their actions' (*The International Herald Tribune*, qtd. in *Politika*, December 21, 2002). Media reports in Serbia characterized Biljana Plavšić's confession as 'brave' (*Politika*, December 23, 2002). B92 led the way in expressing optimism. Citing statements of international public persons in the field of peace and reconciliation, B92 reported that Plavšić 'gave herself a new chance, but what is more important is that residents of the former Yugoslavia get a new chance to take a step toward a more tolerant future' (B92 2002). Mirsad Tokača, a member of the BiH state-level Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes,<sup>12</sup> also stated for B92 that the confession 'will have great significance to the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region,' and that 'this is the start of tearing down [the wall of] silence [erected by] the perpetrators' (B92 2002).

Within this narrative model, Biljana Plavšić's sex again plays a decisive role in media representations of her confession. Plavšić is portrayed as a woman with 'moral strength' and 'bravery' unlike the cowardly men hiding from the Hague Tribunal, and a woman who, in accordance with female principles of reconciliation and repentance, ceases to play the 'man's game' and replaces the collective, nationalist 'we' discourse with the female, private 'I' discourse. Particularly during this period, the case of Biljana Plavšić is observed in contrast to the case of Slobodan Milošević, where he 'hides behind the people,' and she bravely confesses to her crimes in her own name and thus 'frees the people from collective guilt.'

*b. An example of the victim in the name of the nation.* Nevertheless, contrasting 'female bravery' with 'male cowardice' is not a step beyond the framework of the nationalist narrative. 'While the courtroom echoed with Biljana Plavšić's words of confession and

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<sup>12</sup> Present-day name: Research and Documentation Center (translator's note).



remorse, Milošević took her seat without even the notion of following the example of the only woman indicted by the Hague Tribunal' (Šuvaković 2002). 'Biljana Plavšić mustered the courage to speak for herself, and unlike Milošević, not to drag the people with her into the courtroom' (Šuvaković 2002). Classical elements of femininity – the private and intimate sphere – here contribute to the order of gender due to the insistence that she is primarily a woman and that this is why she was able to muster the strength to go beyond the political 'we' into the private 'I,' while men are unable to do so (cf. the example of Milošević). In *Politika*, an article with the subheading 'The Female Example' states that 'for now there is no indication' that Ratko Mladić or Radovan Karadžić will follow the example of 'Biljana Plavšić, who packed her own bags and appeared before the judges in the Hague voluntarily. *Although she pleaded not guilty*, she considered [surrendering] her duty to the *Serb people* who have suffered massively' (Šuvaković 2001). Soon this narrative of the 'moral act of a brave woman' is implanted with discourses that shall gradually prevail in Serbia's media scene. Two vital narrative elements are introduced: she 'pleads not guilty' and she pays her respects not only to the Muslim and Croat peoples, but also the Serb people who suffered massively. In doing so, the representation of Biljana Plavšić's confession retains two substantial elements: by appearing before the court in her own name and confessing she confirms her gender, and by what lies hidden beneath the confession she confirms her nationality, or her warrior past. This keeps her character within the borders defined by nationalist discourse.

The discourses of femininity and nationalist leader-warrior continuously intermingle and blend into one another. B92 cites a statement by the then-Prime Minister of Serbia, Zoran Đinđić, where he emphasizes the courage of Biljana Plavšić for admitting her own responsibility *and in doing so taking away the burden of responsibility from the nation and state* (B92 2002). This gradually introduces the narrative model that emphasizes Biljana Plavšić's sacrifice and acceptance of responsibility for the sake of her people and state, and not out of a moral obligation

to other peoples. In reports from the courtroom, B92 stresses the portion of Plavšić's statement where she says, 'I accept responsibility for the crimes, and this responsibility does not extend onto other leaders, and certainly not onto the Serb people' (B92 2002a). The media also cites her full confession (B92 2002b). Thus the media, assisted by the text of Biljana Plavšić's confession, as well as the statements of relevant actors on the political scenes of Serbia and the Republika Srpska's of the time, upholds and reinforces the identity of the 'Serb Joan of Arc,' who assumes the burden of collective guilt onto herself. Within this frame of media representation, the female, private 'I' confession gradually transforms into the second female domain – the victim. The nationalist victim element is the 'conscious' victim, or heroism – sacrifice committed for the sake of the nation.

Unlike traditionally 'independent media' in Serbia, tabloids, press oriented to the right wing, and even 'mainstream' media mainly follow the nationalist pattern and reinforce and affirm familiar nationalist discourses via the case of Biljana Plavšić. *Politika* reminds that 'unfortunately, no leader of some other nation has so far been publicly indicted by the Hague Tribunal,' but that this does not diminish her responsibility (Šuvaković 2002). Again in *Politika*, an article in the section 'Serbs in the Hague' on Biljana Plavšić's confession and repentance ends paradoxically with images of the Serb exodus from Knin. The author of the article reminds that 'several hundred thousand Serbs set out for the native land in the largest tractor convoy in history. Several dozens were killed or died on the way,' and concludes, 'This is rarely mentioned in The Hague. They are after major perpetrators of terror against non-Serb populations. Why only this, when these feuding prisoners brought the greatest evils precisely upon Serbs?' (Stojadinović 2002). Following nationalist patterns and commonplaces, the media text initiated by Biljana Plavšić's confession crosses over from an individual case to a generalized narrative on the 'injustice' and 'victimhood' to which the Serb people are exposed. Thus the narrative on Biljana Plavšić serves merely as a trigger for affirming and reinforcing nationalist discourse.

The identity of woman ('I') and the identity of the nationalist heroine ('we') continuously alternate. At one moment, she is the crying and remorseful woman, and already in the next we find out she does so 'in the interest of the people' by assuming all of the guilt herself in order to 'save the people' from collective guilt. The motif of suffering for a greater cause and in the name of one's own people often finds its way into statements and newspaper articles. She says she has no right to complain of prison bearing in mind all the suffering of the war, and says she wishes to remove the burden of responsibility from the whole of the Serb people through her confession. She once again renounces her personal and female 'I' in favor of the nationalist, collective discourse of 'we.' Her statements are repeated in different contexts, such as where she explains why she has no wish to comment on Milošević's insults about her, 'I have no right because one must put at the forefront the interest of the people' (Štavljanin 1996, p. 18-19). In the same interview, she says that she is not about to change her attitude on the 'steady national course ... because I have one attitude about the Serb nation, and it is truly immutable' (Štavljanin 1996, p. 18-19). 'I never dealt with politics. I dealt with my people. If things would have been good for my people, I never would have been here at all' (Šuvaković 2009). In her statements, Biljana Plavšić adapts to the gender-marked nationalist discourse that disallows women from dealing with politics. In the nationalist narrative, the woman is primarily assigned the roles of mother, sister and woman-warrior, and the reproducer of the nation and guardian of the 'moral virtues of the nation.' As has been shown, in certain cases the nationalist imagination accepts the woman-warrior. The conditions for this are that she carry herself with a 'male strut,' i.e. behave like a man, but that she have a 'female soul,' i.e. that she is adorned by classical elements of normative traditional femininity: emotionality, sacrifice for others, and 'virginity,' or sexual inactivity.

*c. An example of female care and culinary skills.* However, where the protagonist of the story is a woman, nationalist discourse and grandiose narratives on

reconciliation between the nations, national suffering, and international conspiracies are not far from the discourse of romance novels. This is most aptly proven by a series of articles in *Politika* where a journalist of the newspaper interviews Biljana Plavšić on the flight to The Hague to serve her prison sentence. The interviews disclose nothing of the identities of the passionate warrior, the penitent, the sufferer Biljana Plavšić, nor of the fact that she was convicted of grievous war crimes.

When she took off her mink coat and settled comfortably into her spacious business-class seat, wearing slacks, a sweater, and track shoes, her hair neatly done, she had the appearance of a madam who was taking a somewhat fatiguing Christmas trip, and wanted to feel comfortable in casual sportswear. (Šuvaković 2002)

After these introductory lines, anyone versed in romance novels would expect the appearance of a middle-aged man in an expensive suit that would ask the lady in the mink coat whether the ‘spacious business-class seat’ next to her was available. Instead, the story introduces Slobodan Milošević, and the story shifts from the ambience of a Christmas trip to a prison cell. The reader thus retreats back from the discourse of a women’s magazine to the genre of the news article about a person convicted of war crimes, but even in such surroundings Biljana Plavšić retains typically female traits. In prison, she is presented as the good and pious cook. On the other hand, however, the identity of the principled and imperturbable warrior who ‘carries herself with a male strut’ reappears. The journalist calls her the ‘iron lady of the Republika Srpska,’ who cordially and amicably agreed to the interview on the plane. The very choice of questions suggests which discourses shall shape the narrative of her departure to serve the prison sentence. The journalist asks Biljana Plavšić questions concerning her life during the eight months in detention in the Hague prison and her relationship with Slobodan Milošević.

In the common room, you all cook and spend time together?

Yes, all of us from the same floor. I baked pie for Easter. There is laughter and sorrow. We baked *uštipci*<sup>13</sup> on the day before I was to leave. Then all of a sudden Milošević came to the door. I told him to wait for me in the hallway...

And he waited for the *uštipci* in the hallway?

Yes, in the hallway.

Her femininity is made apparent even in detention. She bakes and cooks, and apart from that, she is also noble – having felt pity for Milošević, she gave him her ‘seven days of walks’ in the prison courtyard as a gift. Near the end of the interview, she emphasizes her morality and devotion to the people. After having seen ‘horrific accidents and tragedies ... it is really not nice or in good taste to complain of prison,’ and her only grudge against Milošević is his having ‘used the people’ for personal gain. In the last paragraph, we shift from the discourse of national heroine to the female discourses of everyday life, female care, and beauty. The journalist informs us that Biljana Plavšić trimmed her hair ‘before leaving for Scheveningen, because the prison is visited by men’s barbers only’ (Šuvaković 2002).

*d. An example of piety and martyrdom.* In an article run by *Politika* on the very next day another character trait of Biljana Plavšić, merely hinted at in the previous article, is further developed, namely religiosity. ‘*Deeply religious*, she swore on her ‘holy cross’ in front of all of us on the plane that there was no plea bargain with the Prosecutor concerning her *personal* act of admitting guilt’ (Šuvaković 2002). The journalist stresses that Biljana Plavšić refused to shake hands with Milošević when he was at the peak of power because of ‘his relationship to her and to the people in Bosnia,’ but says that she did shake hands with him in prison. She most likely did so, the article claims, ‘without changing her character,’ ‘out of Christian charity’ (*Ibid.*). This series of articles from ‘our special reporter’ abounds in Christian motifs

and discourses. Biljana Plavšić enlists with the martyrs and the righteous of the Christian world, and the courtroom, instead of a place of rationality and laws, becomes a church. ‘The courtroom had the appearance of a church where words such as repentance, reconciliation, catharsis, peace, justice, future, healing echoed like the occasioned Christmas carol or prayer’ (Šuvaković 2002).

## Release from Prison and First Days of Freedom (2008-2009)

After numerous appeals for pardon both by Biljana Plavšić herself and other people from Serbia’s public life, she was granted early release and arrived to Belgrade on October 27, 2009.

*a. Ordinary woman.* News reports on the first days of Biljana Plavšić’s freedom after her early release from prison are dominated by discourses of everyday life in which her gender identity becomes dominant over the identity of nationalist leader. It is stressed that she is an ordinary woman who wishes to lead an ordinary life. ‘The only woman indicted by The Hague, and the only person found guilty to apologize for her crimes, said upon leaving prison, ‘I want to lead a normal life.’’ The main motifs in this narrative are food, family, emotions, freedom, and everyday life. The heading ‘Biljana Plavšić arrives to Belgrade for *urmašice*’<sup>14</sup> (T. N. Đ., 2009, p. 8) brings the main character closer to the audience with its familiar discourse and makes her one of us. ‘She asked for nothing special before arriving to Belgrade, but the family will nevertheless greet her with vegetarian food and a Sarajevan delicacy – *urmašice*.’ Familial and everyday discourses emphasizing the family environment welcoming

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<sup>14</sup> Finger-sized dessert pastry drenched in sweet agda syrup (translator’s note).

Plavšić back from prison and her bond with family and friends are favored. The main persons interviewed by journalists are Plavšić's brother and sister-in-law, and news reports abound in details from the domestic, private atmosphere, such as, for example, the homemade food prepared for Plavšić. This phase in reporting on Biljana Plavšić shifts completely from the public to the private sphere, from the collective 'we' discourse to the female 'I,' from the rationality of a politician and scientist to female emotionality, from the radicalism and iron-like qualities of the warrior to female vulnerability, from the imperturbability of the nationalist heroine to the suffering and impotence of an old woman, and from political discourse to the discourse of everyday life.

Interestingly, the same narratives and discourses appearing in newspapers with high circulation, considered 'mainstream' press, also appear in tabloids known for their ultra right-wing discourse. For example, the emotional and familial discourse emphasizing the narrative of family gatherings and intimacy appears both in *Novosti* and in *Kurir*. The main persons interviewed in both cases are the brother and the sister-in-law. Heading: 'Brother Zdravko: We both cried,' 'We talked mostly about family, family members, about what has changed. Both sides cried,' said Zdravko Plavšić for *Kurir*' (Jovanović 2009, p. 3), and the motif of 'homemade coffee' is given a central place in both daily newspapers: 'She wanted to have a cup of homemade coffee' (Jovanović 2009, p. 3). The discourse of emotionality and everyday life is likewise adopted by the President of the Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, who greeted Biljana Plavšić at the airport: 'I am fortunate to have been with her through tough times. I will likewise be with her today to share in these joyous moments. She has suffered through a lot, but the time has come for her to leave all of that behind ... and return to normal life.' 'You know, Biljana is just an ordinary citizen here in Serbia, and she is very aware of that. That past war was waged in another state. It's not a war that belonged to this country,' are the words of her sister-in-law Vaska cited by *Kurir* (Raković 2009, p. 4) and *Glas javnosti* (Raković 2009,

p. 6). Citing one of the key narratives of Milošević's post-Dayton nationalist narration on how 'Serbia was not in war' through the speech of Biljana Plavšić's cousin, the media intermingle motifs of 'ordinariness,' 'normalcy,' 'femininity,' 'old age,' 'family' with a nationalist narrative gaining in rhetorical force modified thus by the ideologies of everyday life and femininity.

That the center of the narrative about Plavšić's arrival to Belgrade after having served her sentence for war crimes are the discourses of everyday life and family, far away from the drama of the public sphere, is further confirmed in a statement by Bruno Vekarić, the spokesperson of the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor: 'Plavšić is now a free woman, and neither the state nor Biljana Plavšić need any pressure and dramatizing' (Ž. J., T. N. Đ., M. T., 2009, p. 4).

During this period, nationalist discourse and Biljana Plavšić's nationalist leader identity are, in a manner of speaking, entirely abandoned in favor of gender identity, which ensures privacy as opposed to publicity, and politics/the people in favor of the family.

The identity of the lonely and modest old woman is particularly emphasized after the motif of the television set is introduced into the narrative, intended to keep the *old lady* company in the days of loneliness to come. 'Nevertheless, Zdravko and Vaska agreed to buy her a brand-new TV set because the old one was nearly dead. 'They didn't have to do this,' she said. But she was glad. It will make a difference to her in those moments when we're not there' (Marković 2009, p. 9).

No room is left for attributes formerly played up by the media in Serbia as key to her role in the region's war and political life (courage, determination, imperturbability, enthusiasm, etc.) in the construction of Biljana Plavšić's new identities. She is now presented as an ordinary, feeble old woman. Her surroundings are no longer the open spaces of public gatherings and battlefields, but the interior of her apartment; her private apartment and family replace the iconography of flags dominated by



politicians; and attributes of vulnerability, modesty, impotence, loneliness, kindness, etc. are used to portray her personality.

*a.1. Food.* Food plays a large role in the construction of the discourse of everyday life. ‘Plavšić’s greeting was touching and cordial, with *urmašice* prepared by her sister-in-law,’ she missed ‘homemade coffee,’ and could not wait to make ‘strong chicken soup.’ ‘Biljana is a much better cook than me, and I won’t torture her with my tasteless meals. I prepared cutlets in sauce for her,’ said Vasilija to one of the reporters (Milanović 2009). ‘Cutlets for Biljana’s welcome’ – a title in the newspaper Alo (I. K., B. M 2009). ‘She invited us to a morning cup of coffee,’ said Dr. Vasilija. It was once our family’s ritual in Sarajevo, before the war, and later too, in Banja Luka and Belgrade.’ ... She then told her sister-in-law that she would like to make a strong chicken soup herself, for nourishment. ‘The smell of the soup spread over the whole apartment. Biljana knows how to cook well. Her mother, my late mother-in-law, taught all of us the skill of cooking.’ Typically female discourses of the kitchen, of passing down women’s knowledge from one generation to the next here become key to the construction of the narrative on Biljana Plavšić after her release into freedom. Such a reporting style is characteristic both of tabloids and the ‘mainstream’ media. ‘Biljana Plavšić comes to Belgrade to *urmašice*’ – headline in *Blic* (T. N. Đ., 2009, p. 8). ‘She asked for nothing in particular before coming to Belgrade, but the family will nonetheless greet her with vegetarian food’. (T. N. Đ., 2009, p. 8).

The motif of cooking skills is, however, absent in reporting on Biljana Plavšić during the war and during her governance of the Republika Srpska. Only in the second and third period of reporting on Biljana Plavšić, which are marked by her surrender to the Hague Tribunal, her confession, term in prison, and first days of freedom, are her domestic (culinary) abilities increasingly emphasized. She ‘makes *uštipci*’ in prison (Švaković 2002), ‘bakes and cooks’ (Telesković 2009, p. 9) and upon arrival to her Belgrade apartment makes some chicken soup.

In the article ‘Željna sam sunca i vazduha’<sup>15</sup> (Marković 2009, p. 9), the main person interviewed is again her sister-in-law Vasilija. The narrative of the first days of Biljana Plavšić’s freedom, through the voice of her sister-in-law, turns her into a heroine who returned to the family nest after long suffering and torture. She is portrayed as an emotional and warm woman who never forgets her relatives, or reporters, and who is an excellent cook, undemanding, modest, and grateful.

When on Tuesday afternoon Biljana Plavšić walked into her apartment in the Belgrade neighborhood of Vračar, she first went to the window, set it wide open, and paused for a moment, leaning her arms against the window sill. ‘I yearn for sunshine and fresh air,’ she told her brother Zdravko and sister-in-law Vasilija. The window stayed open for a long while, and you could hear the sound of the accordion and the song ‘Nema raja bez rodnoga kraja’<sup>16</sup> from the street as she embraced her brother and sister-in-law and told them of everything, repressing memories of the days in prison. She was worn out and tired, and yet blissful for her freedom and seeing her loved ones and Belgrade.

The main character of this story, a modest, grateful woman who went through hardship, even has a ‘kind’ security detail. She is portrayed through discourses of femininity as a real, typical woman: caring and kind to all. ‘She phoned the friends she had no time to call on Tuesday. She encouraged them during the conversations, ‘Don’t worry, I’m fine.’’ Several times it is stressed that she asked for nothing from her family.

*b. Pragmatic, above all.* A special motif, Biljana Plavšić’s practical plea bargain with the Hague Tribunal, appears in the earlier period as well. It is, however, originally

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15 *I yearn for sunshine and fresh air*, Serbian (translator’s note).

16 *There is no paradise without home*, Serbian (translator’s note).

completely denied in media reports.<sup>17</sup> Its currency increases in later years, and in the period after prison becomes the central motif of her confession and surrender to the Hague Tribunal. ‘She pleaded guilty for war crimes in exchange for the dismissal of the indictment [count] of genocide’ (T. N. Đ., 2009, p. 8). Her confession is in this manner characterized as a practical and somehow coerced act. Reports state that she actually pleaded innocent, but had to confess (1) so that the court would render a lesser sentence, and (2) to sacrifice for her people and free it from collective guilt. In both cases the subtext reveals some of the essential nationalist myths of Milošević’s Serbia, i.e. ‘the conspiracy of the international community’ and the ‘hatred of Serbs.’ Biljana Plavšić is presented as a person who stands in defense of the Serb people and bears on her own back the burden of guilt assigned by the international community to the Serb people. This narrative bears the new identity of Biljana Plavšić – the identity of the sacrificing penitent, who nevertheless stays brave and passionate, traits that ‘adorned’ her during the war and immediately after the war.

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<sup>17</sup> The report in *Politika* stresses that there is no bargain. The article states that Biljana Plavšić’s attorneys ‘resolutely deny that any bargain on the length of the sentence has been arranged between the defendant and the prosecution,’ and then repeats once again in direct speech the statement of one of the attorneys: ‘Mrs. Plavšić made no agreement with the Hague prosecution’ (*Politika*). ‘I have not agreed to any bargain on the length of the sentence, nor did I want anything of the kind’ (Šuvaković 2002). *Glas javnosti* published the article ‘Western media claim that an agreement between the Hague and Plavšić exists after all’ (*Zapadni mediji tvrde da dogovor između Haga i Plavšićeve ipak postoji*, original title in Serbian, translator’s note) (January 12, 2002). The only example of transparent and documented reporting on Plavšić’s bargain with the Tribunal: ‘she agreed to a plea bargain with the Prosecutor’ (B92 2002). ‘Nevertheless, the agreement of Plavšić with the Prosecutor, whatever it really is, is so far the most atypical of all other agreements between the Prosecutor and one of the accused’ (Mitrinović 2002).

Proving successfully that women can be more practical and intelligent than men, the former President of the Republika Srpska returned to Belgrade on October 27, 2009 after less than nine years away. (Skrozza 2009, p. 10)

The same article bears the subheading of ‘Pragmatism Above All Else.’ The *Vreme* article traces her pragmatic character trait to post-war events where, ‘counting on international support,’ she supported democratic change. *Vreme* stresses her responsibility for crimes and false remorse. ‘I sacrificed myself. I did nothing wrong,’ she said in a recent interview for a Swedish paper,’ *Vreme* cites her statement to a Swedish newspaper (Skrozza 2009, p. 10).

*c. Guilt-free.* Articles on the first days of Biljana Plavšić’s freedom stress that she is ‘the only woman convicted by the Hague Tribunal,’ and often describe her as the ‘former President of the RS,’ and very rarely as a ‘war criminal’ (with the exception of *B92* and *E-novine*). Biljana Plavšić is the *former* President of the Republika Srpska, but not a former convict. Her convict identity is annulled and not mentioned, not even with the attribute former. ‘Biljana Plavšić, the former President of the Republika Srpska, *and until two days ago, a convict* in the Swedish prison Heisenberg, recount the Plavšićes, had no demands of her family.’ In *Kurir*, Plavšić is exclusively the ‘former the President of Republika Srpska.’ The paper cites statements by her friends: ‘She endured all of this well, seeing how she is guilty of nothing. She is the least guilty of all the residents of the RS, let alone the politicians.’ The only woman convicted by the Hague Tribunal is the dominant description of Biljana Plavšić in *Novosti*: ‘the only female Hague convict.’

Plavšić served two thirds of her sentence in Sweden and exhibited model conduct. Her prison conduct was commended. Biljana Plavšić took walks with other prisoners, and kept herself occupied with ‘baking and cooking.’ She pleaded guilty before the court, even though this was only to bargain for a lesser sentence. (Telesković 2009, p. 9)

The identity of Biljana Plavšić as a feeble old woman unjustly imprisoned is fairly frequent and appears in the media more recurrently during 2008 and 2009. An article titled ‘Biljana Plavšić gubi nadu!’<sup>18</sup> states:

The president of the committee for her release, Svetozar Mihajlović, stated that Plavšić feels like a marathon runner who is losing hope of being able to make it to the end of the race. Her age and the brutality of prison are taking its toll. ‘Mrs. Plavšić is upset with the conditions under which she is serving her sentence and the long time she is spending in prison,’ said Mihajlović. (Biljana Plavšić gubi nadu 2008, p. 10)

Biljana Plavšić is not only a feeble old woman, but also someone who is mistakenly put in prison. ‘How am I to feel in prison among prostitutes, murderers, dealers, drug addicts, thieves, and con-artists?’ (B92 2009). Closely linked to such discourse is the emphasis of her identity of intellectual and scientist, ‘reprimanded over books’ in prison.

As we have found out, Plavšić has been reprimanded twice in the Heisenberg prison for having more books than regulations allow. In the first instance, she was found in possession of 15 books, and 20 books in the second, while prison regulations state that prisoners are allowed to own only five books. (Telesković, 2009, p. 9)

Her profession otherwise played a decisive role in her earlier political statements. For example, ‘Every change of the kind would be an experiment vivo, as we say in the lab. It is an experiment on the living corpus of the people of the Republika Srpska’ (*Nezavisne novine*, January 13, 1999). ‘I am a biologist so I know: the best ability of adaptation and survival is exhibited by species that live alongside other species that endanger them’ (Čolović 2000, p. 32).

In addition to her brother and sister-in-law, the main persons interviewed on Biljana Plavšić’s first days of freedom are her friends and defense attorneys, as well as

politicians, such as the President of the RS, Milorad Dodik. Next to the discourses of emotion and religion, the discourse of law is introduced. Both have the goal of exculpating Biljana Plavšić. ‘ ‘She served her sentence and is free according to all earthly and divine laws,’ said Dodik’ (Jevtić, Ž, Nikolić-Đaković, T 2009, p. 17), ‘ ‘Plavšić is now a free woman, and neither the state nor Biljana Plavšić need any pressure and dramatizing,’ says Vekarić’ (Ž. J., T. N. Đ., M. T., 2009, p. 4). In addition, ‘Rasim Ljajić, the president of the Council for Cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, said that ‘the government must be careful in its contact with Biljana Plavšić because of the international community, because someone might abuse it’ ’ (*Ibid.*).

Regardless of her admission of guilt before the Hague Tribunal, her friends are fortunate that Plavšić has ‘finally been set free from an unjust punishment.’ Mihajlović is satisfied that here she will find, according to his assessment, what she missed the most in prison – recreation, walks, and the church, for she is a ‘great, true believer’. (V.V. 2009)

d. The tabloid heroine. Media representations dominated by motifs and narratives characteristic of tabloid reports of the world of show business, romance novels, and soaps also appear in this period. The first striking thing is the reports’ strong visualization. All of the articles on Biljana Plavšić’s first day of freedom abound in photographs: Biljana Plavšić and Milorad Dodik smiling and holding hands, a ‘black Audi’ at the airport in Sweden that Biljana Plavšić boards, Plavšić with her family and Dodik in her apartment, the accordion player under her apartment window, etc. Novosti (E. R. 2008, p. 20) describes Plavšić’s appearance in detail: ‘Traffic was briefly stopped, and then a convoy of vehicles entered the street. Dodik came out of the Audi first, followed by Plavšić, who was wearing a coat, track shoes, and a jogging suit.’ Interestingly, the media are interested in all the details about the brands and types of cars and airplanes used to transport Plavšić.

She was transported from prison in a black BMW 540 with a police escort to the international airport Arland, where she boarded a Cessna 525 with Republika Srpska markings. (Milanović 2009)

The former president of the RS landed at Nikola Tesla airport in a Republika Srpska-owned Cessna 525. She was greeted by the RS Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, on the runway, and driven to her apartment in his Audi. (I. K., B. M., 2010)

Several hours earlier, around 10.35, Biljana Plavšić wearing a long brown coat, stepped out onto the runway from a BMW 450, belonging to the prison authorities of Sweden. A Cessna 525 airplane bore the markings E7-SMS, the Serb flag on a gray background, and the title 'Republika Srpska' above the cabin window. (Ž. J., T. N. Đ., M. T 2009, p. 4)

'A bouquet of flowers for Biljana' is the title of an article talking about the technical details of her departure from prison, and the former warden of the Swedish prison bringing her flowers as goodbye (Šuvaković 2009, p. 9). 'I went to prison wearing a coat' is the title in *Politika*, under which is the following: 'I was wearing it when they handcuffed me' (Šuvaković 2009, p. 9).

In some newspaper articles, the narrative is emphasized to such an extent as to give it novel-like properties. 'A new morning dawned on Belgrade as if in cahoots with the joy of Biljana's return. The inexplicable joy only felt by a captive of many years whose days passed in a prison room with uncertainty whether she would ever reach freedom' (Marković 2009, p. 9).

*e. The heroic martyr.* In between *urmašice*, chicken soup and homemade coffee, and tears and embraces in reports of the first days of freedom, big words introducing discourses of suffering, martyrdom, and heroism appear. 'Svetozar Mihajlović, the president of the committee of support for Biljana Plavšić, says she will visit the Republika Srpska often, and that she may be expected there as soon as 'she is back on her feet' to promote her biography titled *Biljana Plavšić: Hero and Martyr*<sup>19</sup> (V. V. 2009). Interestingly, Biljana Plavšić is not a 'heroine or martyress,' but a 'hero and martyr' (E. R. 2009, p. 20). Failure to use the feminine gender in nouns characterizing

<sup>19</sup> *Biljana Plavšić – heroj i mučenik*, original title in Serbian (translator's note).

her suffering indicates the dismissal of typically female discourses of ordinary, everyday life, emotions, family and food, and a return to the discourses of suffering and martyrdom for the sake of greater goals (the nation, religion, etc.). The discourse of suffering is fairly common in recent reports on Biljana Plavšić. ‘The Serb iron lady,’ as she was called by Western media, described her days by saying, ‘In the last years of my life, I hit rock bottom.’ Now she rejoins her loved ones, brother Zdravko and sister-in-law Vasilija’ (Marinković 2009, p. 9). ‘She hit rock bottom’<sup>20</sup> is the title of an article in *Politika* (Ibid.). ‘Plavšić was hospitalized due to a lack of breathing air, she broke an arm running from female inmates charged with prostitution, murder, drug addiction’ (Ibid.). *Glas Srpske* stresses that Biljana Plavšić ‘arrived home on the great Orthodox holiday of St. Paraskevi of Serbia, the patron-saint of women’ (Milanović 2009). ‘Biljana is a great believer and she missed going to church during her stay,’ and the first place she will go to shall be a church (I. K., B. M., 2009). ‘Today I can tell you, I only talk to God about my repentance’ (Šuvaković 2009).

Asked by reporters whether she would change anything in her life, she says, ‘I would do everything the same way; it would probably be the same. I don’t complain about the path God has chosen for me’ (Šuvaković 2009).

Gender-marked discourses employ constitutive elements of melodramatic structure, such as women’s tears, the subjective position of the woman, female suffering, and the character of the female protagonist with traits characteristic of a ‘true’ woman: modest, kind, warm, family-oriented, a good cook. Another trait drawn from melodrama by the reports is the event’s shift from the ambience of open and public spaces to the household, the family, and an intimate indoor environment. What is suggested by melodramatic elements, among others, is the melodramatic convention

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<sup>20</sup> *Upoznala je dno života*, original title in Serbian (translator’s note).



that good always prevails. The reports thus suggest through subtext (on a connotative level) that, after her suffering, Biljana Plavšić deserves her peace in the circle of family, and that justice prevails after all.

The title ‘Biljana Plavšić cries upon landing in Belgrade’<sup>21</sup> (Ž. J., T. N. Đ., M. T., 2009, p. 4) puts to the forefront her emotions as well as that ‘she is now a free woman.’ The title of a brief report: ‘Brother Zdravko: We both cried,’ ‘There was crying on both sides,’ said Zdravko Plavšić for *Kurir* (Ibid)

In a report on the arrival of Biljana Plavšić to Belgrade, (Jovanović 2009, p. 3) puts at the forefront ‘tears.’ The title mentions that Plavšić ‘cried’ upon landing to Belgrade, and in the beginning of the text she ‘cried’ when at the Belgrade airport the plane exit doors opened, and then ‘cried in her home once again.’ The meeting was touching, ‘one after another there was intermittent conversation, tears, and laughter’ (Ibid).

‘Finally: Bilja arrived!’ subheading: Biljana Plavšić arrived to Belgrade yesterday, telling reporters excitedly, brimming with tears, that she is very happy to be in Serbia (*Kurir*, September 28, 2009). ‘The embrace of cousins and cries of welcome drew tears to Biljana’s eyes’ (I. K., B. M 2010). ‘Though brimming with tears, she is quite composed and looks great,’ said Svetozar Mihajlović, the president of the committee to free Biljana Plavšić (Ž. J., T. N. Đ., M. T., 2009, p. 4)

## Concluding Observations

Media reports by most of the analyzed media in Serbia have all the characteristics of a good narrative. The center of action is a character – a heroine – that undergoes metamorphoses and variations over time. In line with different time periods, her character is assigned different attributes, descriptions, superlatives, and is set in different environments and locations, and images that present different iconographies. In addition to the main character, there are many other minor characters, which support and assist or perhaps frustrate the protagonist. Causally linked events appear in sequences in a story where time plays a crucial role: past – present – anticipation of the future. Reporters often appear as main narrators or they leave this role to other characters or even the protagonist herself (in several voices, direct and indirect speech). In addition to the master narrative, secondary narratives appear. Each sequence in the coverage of the case of Biljana Plavšić may be observed as a story in its own right and a special narrative. Put together, they comprise the beginning, middle (climax), and end (resolution).

The identity of the protagonist transforms in accordance with the development of the action into several different roles. During the war, Biljana Plavšić is portrayed as the ‘iron lady,’ ‘a hard-liner symbol,’ who carries herself with a ‘male strut.’ Then she is depicted in the typically female role of the ‘aide’ and the victim – the martyr – who assumes guilt and repents for her sins, and thus sets the ‘female example’ of bravery and sacrifice to men suspected of war crimes. The nationalist element of the victim is the ‘conscious’ victim, or heroism – sacrificing oneself for the nation. After the sentencing and during her term in prison, and particularly after her early release from

prison, discourses of femininity are insisted on, and the character of Biljana Plavšić is given all the necessary attributes characteristic of a ‘true’ woman, such as culinary skills, care for others, modesty, pronounced emotionality. She is no longer the ‘iron lady’ but an ‘ordinary woman’ or even a ‘eeble old woman.’ Identities interchange and overlap, and so do the narrative means by which the transformation is accomplished. For example, during the period of the media identity of the ‘iron lady’ there is no information on her cooking ability as well as on her family and relatives, while motifs of the kitchen and family home abound in reports of her first days of freedom after her early release from prison. Among other things, there is significance in the transition from the collective ‘we’ discourse to the female, subjective ‘I’ discourse, as well as in the transition from the open spaces of battlefields and the political stage to the indoor space of the family apartment.

Her gender identity is emphasized throughout the whole of the narrative and functions to reinforce the discourse. In the media narrative on the politician/warrior, information on her family is missing, meaning she is depicted as alone, which reinforces her ‘dedication’ to nationalist goals, as well as her radicalism. She is compared to other radical women from history and often called the ‘iron lady.’ In the narrative on the ordinary woman, she is an excellent cook, she ‘bakes and cooks’ in prison, and enjoys ‘homemade coffee’ and ‘makes chicken soup’ during her first days of freedom. Gender discourses and stereotypes enable the marginalization and minimization of her crimes. She is described in the media as ‘powerless and innocent,’ ‘without influence,’ and an ‘aide,’ which are typically female roles. It is emphasized that in politics and war she never ‘played the main roles.’ In the first phase of her career she aided men – nationalist leaders; in the second phase she aided the West – the international community; till finally ‘aiding her people’ through her confession. Secondary narratives, such as her academic career, are also of interest. The identity of the scientist provides authority and strength to her statements during the war: ‘I am a biologist so I know: the best ability of adaptation and survival is

exhibited by species that live alongside other species that endanger them' (Čolović 2000, p. 32), while, in her prison cell, it separates her from the other inmates and suggests that she does not belong among them: 'As we have found out, Plavšić has been reprimanded twice in the Heisenberg prison for having more books than regulations allow' (Telesković 2009, p. 9). Another motif appearing in media discourse on the Plavšić case is 'female pragmatism.' Motifs of martyrdom and sacrifice for the people alternate with motifs of her pragmatic bargain with the Hague Tribunal. Her confession is characterized as a practical act – she does feel guilty; she agreed to a plea bargain to get a lesser sentence for herself and to free her compatriots from guilt. Biljana Plavšić's 'bargain' is inscribed into nationalist discourse by the ambivalent position of the woman within the collective. Women often symbolize the unity and pride of the collective, but they are on the other hand often excluded from the collective 'we' political body, and in this sense the construction of femininity bears the property of Otherness (Yuval-Davis 1997). Therefore, the confession to the crime and the plea bargain come from the Other. This is why her confession is interpreted in media narratives as 'martyrdom' or 'the female principle,' and not as 'betrayal.'

Motifs of Christianity and martyrdom play a large role in the narrative on Biljana Plavšić as a warrior-martyr and heroine who endured all and sacrificed for the people, only to finally experience salvation. The following motifs appear: justice, Christian morality, humanism, all through the voice of minor characters (politicians and intellectuals, public persons, family, friends, etc.), through the voice of the protagonist (the text of Biljana Plavšić's confession, statements, interviews), and the narrator – journalists. This creates a community of and a link between the protagonist, the minor characters (politicians, statespersons, intellectuals, etc.), the narrator, and the object of narration (the audience). The community is founded on the basis of the same codes and conventions of understanding Biljana Plavšić's case. Discordant media voices are rare and found in so-called independent and anti-nationalist media (e.g. *E-novine*).

Through narrative and discursive strategies, the media explains and brings nearer to viewers and readers the character of Biljana Plavšić, thus asking not only for their understanding, but also identification with the character, both on a national and a gender basis. By intermingling gender with and inscribing it into nationalist discourse, the media offers their audiences acceptable identities and roles to ‘negotiate’ with.

In any case, by offering a specific range of roles, the media narrows down the choice of possibilities. In doing so, they reinvent Biljana Plavšić’s national and gender identities, adjusting them to the needs of a particular period, while reinventing the gender and national identities of the audience to which these media definitions are offered.

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