

Representation of ‘the Neighbor’ in the Serbian and Croatian Print Media

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Submitted to Central European University
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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

(2009)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to gain a detailed insight into the patterns of representation of Serbia and Croatia in each other's print media in 2008 and 2009, almost two decades after the start of the conflict which broke the former Yugoslavia apart. Additionally, the project examined factors influencing the representation of the neighbors specific to the analyzed media organizations. Two newspapers from each country were analyzed by means of content and discourse analysis. Interviews conducted with the editors of the newspapers shed light on the factors behind particular modes of representation. According to the findings, Serbia and Croatia are relatively high on each other's news agenda, compared to the interest of the media for other neighboring countries in the region and the world. Factors influencing the representation of 'the neighbor' were identified primarily in the types of ownership of the analyzed newspapers, their related commercial interests and the accompanying news values. The items covering the issues of war crimes and dealing with the past are marked by prominent remnants of war-time media discourses, primarily by the division between 'us' and 'them', as well as the silence about own crimes, stressing of the crimes of 'the other' and denial of own crimes. This empirical research contributes to the understanding of the present role of the media in overcoming the legacy of the war in the region of former Yugoslavia.

INTRODUCTION

Aims of the Thesis

The research establishes how Serbia and Croatia, former Yugoslav republics and warring parties in the 1990s, are represented nowadays, in 2008 and 2009, in each other's print media respectively - Serbia in the Croatian press and Croatia in the Serbian press. Employing content and discourse analysis of the dailies from the two countries, this empirical research contributes to the understanding of the present role of the media in overcoming the legacy of the war.

The recent history of the region and the role of media in it is a turbulent one. The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, founded in 1943, began to dissolve in 1991 with the secession of the republics Slovenia and Croatia. After Slobodan Milošević came to power in 1987, the media under his control began a spiral of propaganda inciting fear and hatred as a preparation for the devastating war which started in 1991. Media under the regime of Franjo Tuđman in Croatia followed. The nationalist tendencies, suppressed in the former Yugoslavia by the ideology of 'brotherhood and unity', used by the Tito's regime as a cohesive power holding different ethnic groups together in the Federation, began to emerge freely. Hate-speech marked the media discourse during the war, followed by strong animosities in its aftermath. From the times of "brotherhood and unity" in former Yugoslavia, through the war in which they were positioned as enemies, the question now is if the mutual representation of the two countries in the media is at a new stage. The project thus sheds light on the representation of Serbia and Croatia in each other's media at present, more than a decade after the Balkan wars of the 1990s ended and the countries are on the path towards the European Union.

The project will add to the broader understanding of the nature of the role that media in Serbia and Croatia nowadays play in the process of overcoming of the animosities – whether they contribute to them or still further the tensions between the two countries and their peoples. The thesis fills a gap in the existing body of work as there is an absence of research on the mutual representation of the countries of former Yugoslavia in the print media nowadays that would include both content analysis of key journalistic features of the content covering the neighbors and discourse analysis of the contemporary manifestations of nationalism, while putting the findings in the context of the dichotomy of the state and corporate media ownership as reflected in the values of quality newspapers and tabloids.

The research assumes the impact of the mass media on the citizens, but will not attempt to show causal links between the coverage of the neighbor and attitudes of citizens. It is rather interested in what kind of representation of the neighbor a regular reader of newspapers is exposed to on daily basis, assuming that such exposure amounts to a contribution to the change in the attitudes over the time. Moreover, the research ventures into the analysis of the potential influences behind the particular representational patterns of the neighbor in the press, that is avenues in the theory and newsroom practice that contribute to the explanation of the findings and could be examined as causal links in some future projects.

Although the thesis researches the press in the period 2008-2009, it has an underlying *longitudinal dimension*, considering that the findings are set against the trends of representation of Serbia and Croatia in each other's press in the times before the war, leading to the war, during the war and in its aftermath, as found in the available literature. It is thus possible to gain a broad picture of how the role of the media changed from the war times and in what ways it marks important areas of the present-day public discourse. However, only observations about general trends can be made as direct comparisons are prevented by the use of different research methods.

The representation of the neighbor is approached from several key theoretical perspectives that have practical implications for newsroom procedures and thus news reporting, including the implications for the representation of the neighbor in the case of this research. The theory of *news values* (Galton and Ruge 1965; Graber 1989; Westerstahl and Johansson 1994) sets forth the criteria of *newsworthiness*, including the choice of news on the basis of geographic, cultural and economic *proximity* to the country where the news is published, and contributes to the explanation of the quantity and quality of the coverage of the neighbor. The analysis thus sheds light on the global phenomenon of *inward-looking reporting*, that is a decline in foreign news reporting and reporting about neighboring countries (see Franks 2006, Wolter 2006, Udovičić 2007, Car 2007; Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007; Bajomi-Lazar 2007; Malović 2004) by opening this research topic in the region of former Yugoslavia. The angles of the political economy of news and issues of media ownership, as reflected in the underlying factors linked to the particular representation of 'the neighbor', as well as the relationship between the press and its audience, have implications for the news selection, and serve to explain some practices regarding the coverage of the neighbor. At a more banal level, the coverage could also arguably be influenced by personal, subjective preferences of newsroom personnel, so these are examined as well.

The above mentioned factors that could shape the coverage of the neighbors are examined by means of an empirical analysis and substantiated by relevant literature. They are expected to have an effect on the discourse regarding the neighbor, that is quantitatively measured selection, display and type of news items, as well as the intrinsic features of a text approached qualitatively through critical discourse analysis. Additionally, interviews with the newspaper editors reveal factors behind particular modes of the representation of the neighbor.

The method employed to obtain findings is the content analysis of 2 Serbian and 2 Croatian dailies in the period September 2008 – March 2009¹. A tabloid and a quality newspaper were chosen in each country as units of analysis. The quantitative analysis focuses on the following dimensions: size and genre of articles, placement of articles (section of the newspaper), topic, author, key protagonists "representing" the country, whether the links between Serbia and Croatia are framed as locus of cooperation or contestation, as well as general tone of the item regarding the representation of the neighbor – whether it is neutral, negative (critical), discriminatory or affirmative. The qualitative analysis focuses on the discourse (in those items the general tone of which is critical/negative towards the neighbor) on the level of the text and accompanying elements, such as headlines and photos, to capture the forms and patterns of the negative representation of 'the neighbor'.

The comparative dimension of the research is two-fold as it includes both a cross-country analysis of the findings, and a within-country analysis, the latter focusing on the differences and similarities between the coverage of the neighbor by the tabloid and the quality newspaper in each country.

Research Question

The research provides an answer the following key question: *What representation of 'the neighbor'² is constructed by the print media in Serbia and Croatia nowadays, in 2008 and 2009?* Considering the comparative nature of the research, it yields answers to three additional questions: *What are the differences and similarities in the representation of 'the neighbor' between the print media of the two countries?* and *What are the differences and*

¹ Details on the method, sample and coding procedure are explained in the Research Design and Methods section of the thesis.

² The term 'neighbor' is used to denote Serbia as represented in the Croatian press and Croatia as represented in the Serbian press in order to avoid repetition of the phrase.

similarities in the representation of 'the neighbor' between tabloids and broadsheets across the two countries? Finally, it provides some clues as to *Why the representation is as the findings show it to be?*

In order to arrive at the answer to the key, comprehensive research question, and the comparatively-focused ones, a set of auxiliary questions are answered by obtaining data using the coding procedure and the interpretation of the findings. The quantitative findings are focused on answering the following questions (defined as variables in the coding sheet, available in the Appendix):

- How much coverage of 'the neighbor' there is compared to foreign news and domestic news coverage?
- What country/countries of the region get most coverage?
- What is the focus of the coverage of Serbia/Croatia (mainly the other country alone or links of any kind between the two countries)?
- When an item deals with the links between the two countries – is it represented as a locus of cooperation or contestation?
- What sections of the newspapers carry the most coverage of Serbia/Croatia?
- What is the distribution of topics when it comes to the coverage of Serbia/Croatia? (e.g. politics, culture, business/economy, crime etc.)
- What is the distribution of coverage on Serbia/Croatia in terms of size of news items and their genre?
- What is the authorship of the coverage (agency news, in-house reporters, correspondents etc.)?
- What protagonists represent the neighbor (the state and state bodies; politicians; individual citizens etc.)?

- What is the dominant general tone of the coverage of the neighbor (neutral, negative/critical, discriminative, affirmative)?

The purpose of answering these questions is to obtain a comprehensive picture of how ‘the neighbor’ is represented in the press nowadays. For instance, a quantity of the coverage of Serbia in Croatian press and vice versa relative to the quantity of domestic and foreign coverage, including that of other countries in the region, testifies as to the reasoning of the staff responsible for the news production regarding the importance of the coverage of Serbia and Croatia respectively. It indicates how *inward-looking* editorial policy is, that is to what extent it turns readers’ gaze into the country’s own backyard or allows them to look across the fences of the country. *Inward-looking* media, as a consequence of the decline of foreign coverage, which has been a trend internationally for some time now (see Udovičić 2007; Franks 2006; Wolter 2006; Malović 2004), are not conducive to broadening of readers’ horizons and their understanding of the world. This is particularly important in the case of the neighboring countries with a history of wars, as the broadening of knowledge about each other would, arguably, contribute to the overcoming of animosities (see Kurspahić 2003; Reljić 2001). The predominant length of items, and their placement, as well as the number of in-depth, analytical pieces as opposed to brief news items again speak of the effort by the news-makers dedicated to the neighbor. The same applies to the proportion of agency news with little or no editing, and items authored by in-house journalists or correspondents who may produce regular, in-depth coverage of the neighbor. Also, an important feature of the representation of the neighbor is who the main protagonists are of the news items, that is who are those who ‘speak’ on behalf of the country or the nation via the press and *de facto* serve as its ‘representatives’ in the press. Dominant presence of the state and its bodies, or politicians as protagonists would point to the news agenda predominantly set by the current events. On the other hand, actors such as individual citizens or representatives of civil society or the

minorities in a country could point towards a more genuine interest towards understanding what the life of an ordinary citizen is like in the neighboring country, which would be conducive to better mutual understanding between the peoples through every-day problems and issues they face.

Another auxiliary research question is *what forms of negative representation are prominent in the items about Serbia in Croatian press and vice versa?* The focus is on identifying sophisticated forms of negative representation in the discourse considering that the overt hate-speech has subsided in the years after 2000 (see Vilović 2005, Udovičić 2005). This is addressed by the qualitative part of the content analysis. The interpretation sheds light on the potential reasons behind particularly prominent ones among these phenomena which emerge in the findings. The question is important as it enables relating of the findings with the existing literature covering these phenomena in the Serbian and Croatian press in the past, that is in the pre-war times, during the war and in its aftermath. Therefore, it enables an insight into what changes have come about since and whether a leap away from the incitement of hatred in the press has been made and to what extent.

Relevance of the Topic

Sociopolitical setting

Several inter-related socio-political reasons make the topic relevant. First, the issue of dealing with the past in terms of the past conflict, war crimes it engendered and the nationalistic sentiments and hatred incited on both sides as a strategic move by the elites as a preparation for the war. The relations of Serbia and Croatia have historically been burdened by animosities, culminating in the wars of the 1990s, which marked the breakup of Yugoslavia. While the conflicts in Slovenia (1991) and Macedonia (2001) were limited, and

the separation of Montenegro and Serbia (2006) was a non-violent conflict, conflicts in Croatia (1991-95), Bosnia (1992-95) and Kosovo (1998-99) were the cases of civil wars (Kolstø 2008). Croatia emerged as an independent and sovereign state from the war, while Serbia continued to be weighed down by the issue of parting with Montenegro, which was resolved by the independence of Montenegro in 2006, and with the still unresolved issue of the independence of Kosovo. Both Serbia and Croatia carry the legacy of war crimes, with the ongoing trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and at local courts, with the indicted on both sides, including for the atrocities committed against each other's population. The importance of the issue of war crimes and dealing with the past will continue as the war crimes trials increasingly migrate to local courts with the winding down of the ICTY.

Another important factor is the orientation of the countries towards the accession to the European Union and the related path of development. Almost two decades after the former Yugoslavia began to break up through massive violence, the countries are on the path towards the EU, which insists on strong regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (of which both countries are members) when assessing the progress of the countries in the accession process. The accession to EU requires a joint market and stable political relations as EU favors the stable economic and trade region of the Western Balkans. Indeed, in the past several years there has been an increase in the investments between the two countries (Vujović and Ličina 2008).

Burdened with a host of common transitional problems (such as organized crime, corruption, economic problems etc.), the countries share a lot of similarities in terms of development. Both share the same Freedom House Index democracy score³ of 3.64 in 2008, as well as the same scores for the electoral process (3.25), civil society (2.75), independent

³ The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic progress (Freedom House 2006).

media (3.75), local democratic governance (3.75), and corruption 4.50 (Freedom House 2008). There are slight differences in two scores where Croatia performs somewhat better: national democratic governance - Croatia 3.25 and Serbia 4.00, and judicial framework and independence – Croatia 4.25 and Serbia 4.50 (Goehring 2008).

Another issue that marks the current relations between the two countries are the contentions over the status of the Serbian minority in Croatia after a bulk of the ethnic Serb population, estimated at 180.000 (Malović 2001, 136), has left Croatia during the operation ‘Storm’ which marked the end of the war in Croatia in 1995. Due to the widespread mixed ethnic marriages in former Yugoslavia, there are ties between the countries at the personal level, including families with members in both countries.

The similarities in the path of the development of the two countries, coupled with the similarities in their media landscapes, marked by the domination of tabloid newspapers, thus make them comparable cases for the present research, while the past socio-political background points toward the necessity of overcoming the past and the improvement of the mutual perception by the peoples as a component of the reconciliation process. Consequently, the thesis is well-placed to contribute to the understanding of the broader relations between Serbia and Croatia nowadays, considering that there is a gap in comparative studies of this nature in the existing body of research.

Research Design and Methods

The empirical part of the research was conducted using content analysis, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, discourse analysis, as well as semi-structured interviews with media experts (newsroom editors from the newspapers that were included in the analysis). A description of the methods follows.

Selection of print media for content analysis

Print media in each country constitute the main materials of analysis. Although it would be reasonable to claim that TV stations with national frequencies have a larger penetration among audiences than print media, I have chosen to focus on print media for several reasons. First, broadcasting is regulated in both Serbia and Croatia, which implies legal sanctioning for transgressions such as hate speech, which is expected to reduce the instances of inflammatory language or hate speech, the remnants of which from the war discourses I expect to find in the discourse analysis. Print media are subject to self-regulation, which means that journalistic codes of ethics guide the reporting as normative tools, but there is no body resembling regulatory agencies for broadcast media that would impose legal sanctions on print media for similar professional transgressions. Considering the less restrictive nature of self-regulation, I expected print media to be more likely to feature instances of stereotyping, banal nationalism, nationalistic discourse, inflammatory language and hate speech. Also, there is a larger variety of formats and ideological orientations among editions in the print media landscape to choose from as units of observation as opposed to the TV landscape. Additionally, print media feature a greater diversity in content in terms of genres and topics, which are largely absent from TV due to high production costs (e.g.

analytical pieces, commentaries, human interest stories, reportage). Thus the choice of print media allows for a better insight into nuances of the representation of ‘the neighbor’.

Considering the specifics of the Serbian and Croatian media landscapes, with constant turbulent political changes which directly affect them, as well as the upsurge in tabloidization and accompanying sensationalism in the past several years, it is difficult to group the media along the left and right, or conservative and liberal spectrum. However, print media can generally be categorized as quality newspapers, semi-tabloids and tabloids, a categorization which has been commonly adopted by media scholars in the region⁴. A tabloid and a quality newspaper with the biggest circulation in each country were selected for the research, with the circulation being taken as an indicator of the impact of the newspaper on the readership. The choice of tabloids and quality newspapers was based primarily on their stark differences in news values and editorial policies. Namely, the quality newspapers in Serbia and Croatia are traditionally focused on politics, economy, and have strong foreign news coverage. They feature serious, mainly detached and in-depth reporting, free of sensationalism. The tabloids, however, entertain quite the opposite values, as they focus on crime and accidents, bizarre events, show-business and human-interest stories, with a sensationalistic slant. It is mainly the different ownership structure of the tabloids and the quality newspapers that plays a role in the above stated differences in content and preferred news values. The tabloids are privately owned and their key goal is profit, while the quality newspapers are fully (*Vjesnik*) or partially (*Politika*) owned by the state, which is a factor that allows them to steer clear of tabloid values as they are not necessarily lead by the imperative of high circulation and attracting advertising at any cost. The state ownership also influences their editorial policy as they reflect the viewpoints and interests of their respective governments. It was within these

⁴ The typology was chosen for the research in consultation with media scholars prof. Gordana Vilović (University of Zagreb) and prof. Snježana Milivojević (University of Belgrade).

differing factors that this research expected to find differences in the coverage of ‘the neighbor’.

It is important to note a difficulty encountered regarding the official circulation data. So far it has not been possible to get the official data considering that the only official sources (the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and the ABC Serbia – Audit Bureau of Circulation) have not been responsive to the requests for the data for the purpose of this research. Numerous consultations with media researchers, journalists and editors in both countries revealed that media organizations tend to manipulate the figures when it comes to official disclosure, while literature features different figures as they seem to fluctuate considerably from year to year or depending on the sources. However, the information that can be obtained from these well-informed sources informally shows a great deal of consensus in terms of circulation hierarchy between the newspapers, although the exact numbers vary from expert to expert. A combination of circulation data from the available literature, editors of the analyzed newspapers, and the above mentioned sources was the basis for the selection of the newspaper for the analysis⁵. The following newspapers were selected:

	Tabloid	Quality Newspaper
Croatia	24 Sata	Vjesnik
Serbia	Press	Politika

Another difficulty in the preparation for the research is that of obtaining the issues to be analyzed. Either a hard-copy of an issue or a full PDF version with the layout ready for print is required for content analysis. However, only some of the media have hard-copy archives available, but these are not usable due to the physical impossibility to copy or scan the editions as numerous issues are bound in hard volumes containing thousands of pages.

⁵ The circulation data are provided in the descriptions of newspapers in the chapter containing content analysis findings and their analysis.

Also, there is no official procedure as to obtaining PDFs of editions in any of the media organizations. Rather, the only option was to rely on personal contacts in the media organizations or on the good will of the staff, which is what was mainly used to obtain the material for the research. Although the National Library in Zagreb keeps an archive of print media, it does not allow copying, scanning, or taking the material out of the building, while the National Library in Belgrade has been closed to the public for the time being. Thus the process of collecting the material has been a very laborious one, requiring significant investment of time. Croatian daily 'Vjesnik' is the only newspaper which has a collection of issues available online as PDF files accessible at <http://www.vjesnik.hr/pdf/Default.asp>.

The period analyzed covers 7 months, from September 2008 to March 2009. Ideally, a longer period could be chosen in the years after 2000; however, the media landscape changes rather fast in the region and some of the newspapers that have highest circulation nowadays in their respective categories (see the explanation above) did not exist until 3 years ago. It would thus not be feasible to analyze the same set of newspapers over the whole period. In addition to this, an attempt was made to avoid major political events, meaning the events regarding Serbia and Croatia of such scale that made them a subject of extensive coverage in the international media. Examples of such events were the independence of Montenegro in 2006 or the recognition of Kosovo by Croatia in March 2008. It was assumed that such major events would skew the results, as the preliminary insight into the reporting of the recognition of Kosovo, for example, shows considerably heightened negative attitudes by the Serbian press towards this decision by Croatia. The reason why such events were deliberately avoided is the attempt to capture the representation of the neighbor in the banal, everyday reporting, which is the dominant type of coverage in terms of quantity, while major events happen only very sporadically. Some events that stand out in the media for a relatively short time, such as a week or a couple of weeks, however, will not be possible to avoid. Even so, such events can

be understood as belonging to the banal, everyday news as they are not a matter of major, high-level political decisions. Thus the chosen time period does not bias the findings as it is representative of the daily, usual post-war representation of 'the neighbor'.

Newspaper issues were selected using a rotational method⁶. One week was selected in each month (1st week of the 1st month, 2nd week of the 2nd month etc.), and one day in each week rotationally (e.g. Monday of the 1st week of the 1st month, Tuesday of 2nd week of the 2nd month etc). Thus a total of 28 issues of daily newspapers were analyzed (2 newspapers from each country, 7 editions of each). All days of the week are covered, while the random sample ensures that the coverage of a single event for more than a day if it happens to last longer is avoided in order not to skew the results. The dates of the issues selected based on the rotational method are the following: 01 September 2008, 14 October 2008, 19 November 2008, 25 December 2008 (or 24 December 2008 in the case of Croatian press where Christmas editions are published the day before the holiday), 30 January 2009, 07 February 2009, 08 March 2009.

Content and discourse analysis

Content from almost all the sections of newspapers was analyzed (such as: domestic politics, regional politics, international politics, economy, crime, culture, show business, travel), with the exception of advertisements, classifieds, TV guides and supplements. Articles of all sizes, placement, genre and topic are analyzed as long as a country of the region is in the focus of the subject matter of the piece or related to it. 'Country' is understood here as any of the following as means of representation: the state, its bodies and institutions, other organizations, cities and other geographical or administrative entities, events taking place in

⁶ The rotational method was chosen in consultation with three experts: the thesis supervisor prof. Miklos Sukosd, Catherine Coyer, lecturer at the 'Global Media, Governance and Civil Society' course at CEU, as well as with the media scholar prof. Gordana Vilović of the University of Zagreb.

the other country, nation as a collectivity, groups of citizens or individuals. 'The region' is understood as countries neighboring to Serbia which are not members of the European Union – that is: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. Namely, articles covering these countries were coded as to enable a particular segment of the research: a comparison of the coverage of Croatia in the Serbian press, Serbia in the Croatian press with the coverage of other neighboring countries.

Items focusing on Serbia, Croatia, EU countries, EU as an entity, and other countries of the world were counted so as to serve as a quantitative point of reference for the items covering the region. Items about Kosovo were coded as covering Serbia considering that Kosovo is hardly ever covered outside the context of its relations with Serbia. As the items on sports pages feature predominantly flat, procedural reports from competitions around the world, such as listings of results, they were not counted towards the total quota of items and were not subject to content analysis.

The coding sheet, available in the Appendix, is based on an existent standardized mass media content analysis frame, developed by experts in the region and modified to suit the particular purpose of this research⁷.

Items coded as bearing critical/negative tone⁸ toward 'the neighbor' were singled out for discourse analysis. As the media representation of 'the neighbor' is a complex phenomenon involving conscious and unconscious strategies at the level of the body of text (words, syntagms, sentences and the text on the whole), as well as accompanying elements (e.g. headlines, decks, pull out quote boxes, pictures, illustrations), discourse analysis is used to

⁷ The blueprint for the coding sheet employed in this research is the one developed by prof. Gordana Vilović and Igor Kanižaj of the University of Zagreb for the purpose of the research 'Ethical Aspects of the (Lack of) Credibility of Newspapers'.

⁸ By tone we here mean the overall approach to the representation of the neighbor in an item, as composed by the newsroom staff. Even if individual sources in the item speak critically of the neighbor, the item could still be neutral if the intervention by the journalist is such. For a detailed explanation, please refer to the section with the content analysis findings and the analysis.

identify and analyze these elements of narratives which help convey particular representational strategies.

The proposed combination of content and discourse analysis produced a typology of all the above mentioned dimensions of content as per type of newspaper within a country and per the analyzed newspapers between the countries. Combining the quantitative variables with the discourse analysis, it is possible to identify the *loci* of the most intense discursive phenomena – for instance, what topics are nowadays dominantly 'carriers' of remnants of the war-time stereotypes or hate speech.

Interviews

4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with editors of the analyzed newspapers in Serbia and Croatia: Renato Ivanuš, editor-in-chief of the Croatian tabloid *24 Sata*; Ivan Šabić, desk editor at the Croatian quality newspaper *Vjesnik*; Slobodan Samardžija, foreign news editor of the Serbian quality newspaper *Politika*; and Đorđe Odavić, deputy editor of the 'Society' and 'Economy' pages at the Serbian tabloid *Press*.

One questionnaire (available in the Appendix) was developed for all sources, while open-ended questions were also put forward so as to provide answers to issues pertinent to particular findings specific to individual newspapers.

The goal of the interviews with the editors, conducted after the findings were obtained by means of content analysis, was to gain insight into the potential factors behind modes of representation established in the findings that are specific to each media organization. One of the factors is media ownership, related commercial interest in the market and the impact of these on the news values of each newspaper. An additional aim was to get in-depth insights into the news-gathering procedures of each media organization and potential links of these with the representation of the neighbor. Additionally, it was important to see how the needs of

the particular target audiences reflect on the coverage of the neighbor – whether the newsroom gather data from audience surveys or if they base their editorial decision on the subjective perceptions of audience needs. Finally, they were presented with key findings of the research and their opinion was sought regarding particular factors that may reflect on the features coverage of the neighbor, as established by the research.

It is important to stress that the goal was not to establish clear causal links as to the causes of particular patterns of reporting, but merely to shed light on some of them, taking into account a possibility that there are others that we are not aware of. Namely, it is reasonable to assume that the interviewees exhibit a degree of subjective view or bias towards their own media organizations, or may have attempted to keep some information undisclosed had they perceived them to be damaging to the image and reputation of their news organization.

MEDIA IN CONFLICT – A THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Spiral of Hatred – The Beginning of the War

It is a well-known fact that the media had a significant role in the promotion and incitement of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The political elites in power used those media which were under their control as mouthpieces, spreading hatred and fear, while at the same time trying in any way possible to silence the independent media which were opposed to the war (Price and Thompson 2002). In a detailed account of the media propaganda in Serbia and Croatia in the period 1990-1991, Kurspahić (2003) explains the genesis of the spiral of violence, reflected in the media. Milošević's ambition for the Serb domination and 'the greater Serbia' triggered nationalist tendencies in Croatia. When the nationalist Franjo Tuđman became President of Croatia in May of 1990, he promised "Croatia to the Croats" (Kurspahić 2003, 76). This served as an excuse for the local Serb extremists in the areas of Croatia with the Serb majority – Kninska krajina and Eastern Slavonia – to proclaim autonomy in July 1990 refusing to acknowledge the newly elected nationalist government in Zagreb. As a result, "the alarm for national homogenization in Croatia" (Kurspahić 2003, 76) went off, which included "purges from public institutions of all those who were seen as unreliable or unpatriotic" (Kurspahić 2003, 76). The cycle of nationalism was already in full force; the media war followed suit. Both Tuđman and Milošević mobilized the media under their control and by 1991 these were turned into efficient propaganda machines. Kurspahić (2003, 78) cites the account of the initial cycle of media propaganda by Dubravka Ugrešić, a Croatian writer, which vividly sums up the its horrors and magnitude:

Newspapers in Serbia began writing about ustasha concentration camps in World War II (and no one could deny their truthfulness as these camps existed and Serbs, Roma, Jews, but also Croats, perished in them). Serbian television increasingly carried images of those. Croats were increasingly labeled criminals, ustashas. Newspapers in Serbia were full of horrifying stories about

"necklaces made of Serbian children's ' fingers", worn by Croatian ustashas, stories about "genocide" which Croats are preparing again against innocent Serbs. Serbian media propaganda (orchestrated by the Serbian authorities and the Serbian leader) finally achieved its goal: a reaction in the Croatian media. And when the Croatian media were also filled with the stories about "necklaces made of Croatian childrens' fingers" , worn by Serbian "slaughterers" – the preparations for the war were finished. (Ugrešić 1998, 72)

In the summer of 1991, when Slovenia and Croatia proclaimed independence, the actual war began; the media war continued. State broadcasters both in Serbia and Croatia, as well as main newspapers, such as *Politika* in Belgrade and *Vjesnik* in Zagreb, set the tone (Kurspahić 2003, 83). There was no pretense of objectivity, no representation of the other side according to usual journalistic rules, or any critical reflection on one's own country. The media were "entirely aligned along the open 'we against them' conflict" (Kurspahić 2003, 83). The term "ethnic cleansing" entered the media discourse as a label for mass war crimes (Kurspahić 2003, 83) with thousands of dead. In the words of a unnamed Croatian journalist, cited by Kurspahić (2003, 83), "Hate speech became a measure of professionalism". History was invoked and manipulated to justify the war. The war in Croatia, as presented by the Serbian television, was "a holy defense of the century-old Serbian hearths" and defense against "another genocide in the hands of fascist ustasha forces" (Kurspahić 2003, 84). Croatian television presented the war as "defense of the homeland" and "a way to fulfill the thousand-years old dream of independent Croatia" (Kurspahić 2003, 84). The archetypal imagery of good and evil was set into motion, accompanied by invocation of historical animosities and conflicts, whereby everything 'ours' was heroic and holy, while 'they' were the aggressors, "barbarians, slaughterers and beasts" (Kurspahić 2003, 84). The leadership of the Croatian state television created an mandatory list of vocabulary to be used in war reporting and distributed it to its war correspondents. Some of the terms were "Serb terrorists" and "Serbo-Communist occupation army" (Kurspahić 2003, 84). The losses on the Croatian side were to be described as "fallen for Croatian freedom" or "heroes of the homeland defense" (Kurspahić 2003, 84).

Volumes of research have been trying to identify patterns of the negative representation of ‘the other’ by the media in this mayhem of violence by words.

Hate-speech – an attempt to clarify the term

Considering that the literature analyzing war time discourses in the region is largely focused on various forms of hate-speech, and that different authors in the region ascribe different values to it, rarely providing exact definitions of hate speech that guide their own research, we will attempt to clarify the concept. Parekh (2006) stresses the confusion regarding the concept as there is a tendency to include “all forms of uncivil and hurtful speech under it”. According to his definition, “hate speech expresses, advocates, encourages, promotes or incites hatred of a group of individuals distinguished by a particular feature or set of features” (Parekh 2006). He distinguishes hatred from “lack of respect or positive disrespect, dislike, disapproval, or a demeaning view of others” as it “implies hostility, rejection, a wish to harm or destroy, a desire to get the target group out of one’s way, a silent or vocal and a passive or active declaration of war against it.” (Parekh 2006). Three main characteristics distinguish hate speech from other forms of utterance charged with negative emotions: 1) it selects a person or a group based on certain features; 2) it stigmatizes the person or the group “ascribing to it a set of constitutive qualities that are widely viewed as highly undesirable” (Parekh 2006). As these features are deemed innate to the person or the group, it is considered that the situation cannot change making the target “permanently condemned”; 3) The target group is treated as hostile and undesirable, and it is held that it cannot conform to the usual social rules, conventions and relationships. “It may therefore be legitimately exterminated, expelled, discriminated against, or at best tolerated as an unavoidable evil surviving on the margins of society”, concludes the author, and continues by stressing that hate speech does not often come as obviously anger-ridden, insulting or abusive

language. Rather, it can be “subtle, moderate, non-emotive and even bland, and conveyed through ambiguous jokes, innuendos and images.” (Parekh 2006). Here the definition again becomes confusing as the question is how to recognize these subtler forms and distinguish among them and other forms of speech charged with negative emotions. Parekh’s (2006) answer is that any manifestation of hate speech can only be identified within the particular context – historical and cultural, as its “content, import, insinuations, and moral and emotional significance are inseparable from and can only be determined in the light of that context.” Thus Holocaust denial may or may not be interpreted as hate speech. It can be considered a freely expressed opinion, albeit untrue. On the other hand, it is possible to detect hidden meanings, such as that it is an idea constructed by the Jews, that they thus can not be trusted, that “no shared life is possible with them”, in which case the utterance shows all three features of hate speech (Parekh 2006)⁹.

From overt hate-speech to more sophisticated forms of intolerance

A large body of literature deals with the role of the media in the incitement of the war which marked the breakup of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, during the war and in its aftermath (see for example Thompson 1999; Kurspahić 2003; Snyder and Ballantine 1997; Malović and Selnow 2001). These studies focus mainly on the mechanisms of interaction between the political elites of the times and the media in manipulating the audiences. Nationalist ideology in the Yugoslav media and the manipulative representation of the conflict from a wide set of theoretical perspectives is examined by Reljić (2001). Considering that the present paper tackles the forms of intolerance that lurk in the content on Serbia and Croatia in each other's press nowadays and how they are different from the media discourses

⁹ Parekh (2006) provides a set of examples of utterances and explains which ones can be coded hate speech universally and which ones depend on the cultural and historical context.

in the war times, the focus of the following overview is on the works which deal specifically with the war-time discourses in Serbian and Croatian press, as well as with the coverage of these neighbors nowadays.

Slapšak et al. (1997) analyzed the Serbian press (*Politika* and *Borba*) in the period 1987-1991 to establish patterns in media manipulation by the political elite and mechanisms behind it. Slapšak (1997) explains several strategies leading to that end, such as the political manipulation of history as “the most dangerous instrument of nationalistic policy”, deliberate simplifying of social and political thought in order to appeal to the collectivity of masses, the use of ethnic symbolism and stereotypes, as well as of anthropological features, such as taboos (relics, icons, flags etc.), totemism as a discursive tool (hearths, graves, bones, churches etc.), excommunication of the “tainted” (insistence on pure Serbian blood, “genuine” Serbs, condemnation of the “mixing with the other collective”) (Slapšak 1997, 17-37). Cvetičanin (1997, 71-95) explains the genesis of the media obsession with the Kosovo myths and the “megalomaniac” commemoration of the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo orchestrated by the Milošević regime, which fueled the myth of the Serbs as “heavenly people”, a myth of “redemption and suffering” (Schopflin 1997, 29). The motif of victimization of Serbian nation appeared in the media, whereby the Serbs “fell victim to Croatian and Muslim criminals” (Cvetičanin 1997, 85). Mihailović (1997, 97-155) catalogs a host of vicious examples of hate-speech in the media which accompanied the football match between a Croatian and a Serbian team in May of 1990 and thus gave a strong initial push to the anti-Croat rhetoric. Čurgus Kazimir (1997, 157-193) analyses the phenomenon of media propaganda and catalogs key propaganda strategies employed by the Milošević regime: “the elimination of ‘the other’”, i.e. ignoring of the sources of ‘the other’ in the media coverage, “pseudo-historical” and “pseudo-anthropological” discursive structures about the “sufferings of the Serbian people”, by which the media identified the Serbs with their past. Gredelj’s

findings (1997, 195-231) on the media representation of conflict show that the strongest strategies of rhetoric in the Serbian press (1987-1991), such as “attacks and accusations, demands and discrediting, disparaging and intimidation” (Gredelj 1997, 218), were mainly used for a mobilizing effect, with a high degree of emotional charging. He also identifies types of argumentation used to support claims about conflict, and finds that historical argumentation was the most frequent one in *Politika*, reflecting the search for roots of conflict in history, as well as a strong tendency towards stereotyping. Three quarters of texts in *Politika* dealing with various types of conflicts in former Yugoslavia do not follow the golden journalistic rule of citing the other side, while items about conflicts between peoples/nations dominate the news.

Myths are a tool for the use of the ethnic past and re-writing of history for the purpose of manipulating mass emotions, the concept that Smith (1997, 37) labels “a usable past”. Schopflin (1997) examines the political use of myths as tools of *cultural reproduction*, citing Milošević’s re-vamping of various myths embedded in the Serbian collective memory in the late 1980s to grasp power over the people (Schopflin 1997: 24). His answer to the question of who controls myths in a society is that these are “the political and cultural elites, those who control the language of public communication” (Schopflin 1997, 25), for which there is plenty of evidence in this literature review.

In an exhaustive quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Serbian and Croatian press’ coverage of the war in 1991 entitled “Media and War” (2000), a group of authors focused on the main tools of the regimes’ propaganda among the print media – daily *Politika* in Belgrade and *Vjesnik* in Zagreb. The aim was to analyze the key features of war discourse, such as the genesis of hostile representation of ‘the other’, hate-speech, and the discursive division of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The discourse was found to be aggressive, conducive to “ethnic hatred, vulgar nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia” (Reljić 2000, 57). The key findings

point to the dominant theme of conflict in *Vjesnik*, even in the items that were not related to the war. The selection of journalistic forms and genres had a role in the media propaganda, as international sources were increasingly absent, while official sources were dominant, as well as articles with no sources mentioned. Commentary was increasingly mixed with factual information, blurring the lines between fact and nationalistic framing¹⁰. *Politika*'s coverage was dominated by the interpretation of facts in a persuasive tone, rather than straightforward representation, as well as by references to historical events, provided by intellectuals in a move to re-write history. As Reljić (2001, 56-57) summarizes the results of this comprehensive research, two main goals of the nationalist propaganda were: 1) “the achievement of homogenization and mobilization of the nation in order to provide the support to the regime’s political goals.”, realized via the strengthening of the national identity and promotion of the national identity over any other; 2) “the legitimization of the own policy”, realized through the strict polarization of the representation of the involved parties as ‘us’ and ‘them’ by means of hot nationalism and hate-speech.

Sofos (1999) focuses on the performance of *public rituals* and *moral panics* as tools of the spread of nationalism in former Yugoslavia through mass media. He examines rituals of “national regeneration” or “nation-instituting rituals” (Sofos 1999, 167) in Serbia towards the end of the 1980s: the mass baptisms of Serbs in Kosovo and the moving of Prince Lazar’s relics to Kosovo. He notes the religious connotation of these, perceiving them as “pilgrimages”, the routes of which “demarcated ‘the territories of the Serbian nation’” (Sofos 1999, 167). He also examines a “central narrative of Serbian nationalism, that of the nation

¹⁰ The definition of the concept of framing, used in this paper, is provided by Entman (1993): “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described[...]Frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of communication, thereby evaluating them in salience.”(salience here meaning “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences”).

under threat”, which delineates ‘us’ against ‘the others’, spurs national homogeneity, victimization and hatred, even paranoid perception of ‘the others’, spreading *moral panics*.

Đerić (2008) analyzed the coverage of the military operation “Storm”¹¹ by Serbian and Croatian press in the preparation for the action and during it in 1995. She focused on the *silence* in the media discourse as a manipulative strategy, that is the information and presuppositions that remain unarticulated and thus hidden. *Silence* is “an immanent part of every discourse” (Đerić 2008, 68) and thus a conveyor of threat to *social memory* as it is precisely the *silence* that leaves these hidden truths “outside any public problematizing or reconsidering” (Đerić 2008, 66). In some cases, this *silence* is the tool of progressive forgetting of important narratives and national memories. In the context of the operation “Storm”, the *silence* is manifested in two main ways – as a strategic avoidance of the issue and as silence within existing texts about the particular political aspects of the event. In the preparation of the operation, Croatian media were filling the pages with a multitude of irrelevant issues in order to cover the absence of this one. Serbian media were silent about ‘own’ violence which preceded “Storm” (Đerić 2008, 73). Both sides continue to shroud in *silence* ‘our’ crimes and faults even today, more than a decade after the event (Đerić 2008, 73), while only the crimes of ‘the other’ are talked about. The author identifies this continuing *silence* about the operation “Storm” as a “silent conflict” between Serbia and Croatia, which “tells precisely what is attempted to remain unsaid” (Đerić 2008, 73).

¹¹ Operations “Bljesak” and “Storm” were actions by the Croatian military and the police in 1995, with the aim of liberating the largest part of the so-call Republika Srpska Krajina, a territory under the control of Serb extremists which had proclaimed autonomy. “Bljesak” regained Croatian control of Western Slavonia, while “Storm”, conducted in August 1995, regained the control of Kninska Krajina. The territory of Eastern Slavonia was left outside the reach of Croatian authorities and was under the control of the international peace-keeping forces for several years until peaceful re-integration, which prevented the main consequences of “Bljesak” and “Storm” – the exodus of over 180.000 ethnic Serbs (Malović 2001, 136) and atrocities against civilians. Operation “Storm” marked the end of the war in Croatia and changed the demography of the area where it took place. The operation remains a bone of contention between the two countries. Serbia perceives it as ethnic cleansing of the Serbs from Croatia, while Croatia celebrates it as the act of liberation from the Serbian occupation and the founding act of the state (Đerić 2008, 64-97)

Focusing on the coverage of several key political events in the wake of the war and during the war in Croatia, Đurić and Zorić (2008, 126-156) analyzed how the media rhetoric focusing on the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ promoted violence and how its dynamics changed over the time. The negative rhetoric culminated during the battle for Vukovar both in the Croatian and Serbian print media, immersed in “numerous metaphors which presented the other ethnic group as evil by nature” (Đurić and Zorić, 2008, 155).

Research on the contemporary discourses in the media of the former Yugoslav countries focuses primarily on establishing to what extent hate-speech as a vehicle of nationalism or its remnants are present in the media. Thus Vilović (2005, 254-263) provides a genesis of hate-speech in Croatian print media dividing into three periods. The genuine form of hate-speech lasted from 1990 to 1997, to be succeeded by a period marked by softer forms of intolerance (1997-2000) after an appeal by the Croatian government sent to the media in 1997, which required “the use of speech based on tolerance, moderation and cohabitation” (Vilović 2005, 258). The author names the period 2001-2005 “sophisticated intolerance in the media” (Vilović 2005, 259), noting that the phenomenon significantly subsided in the years 2000, ushering in forms of intolerance that are best defined as “politically incorrect speech”, mainly evident in stereotypes regarding minority groups (Vilović 2008, 260). Udovičić (2005) also claims that hate speech in the region has decreased, but that it is still present as a sporadic phenomenon, in changed, “mutant-forms”, such as “prejudice, intolerance or political squaring of accounts”, triggered by particular political events. Similar is the observation yielded by the monitoring of regional press conducted by the students of the Media Plan Journalism School (2005) – there is no hate-speech in the Serbian press in the form that was dominant during the war and in its aftermath, but there are “elements that are certainly not naïve” (Media Plan High College of Journalism 2005). Spaić (2005, 240-253) noticed that while the Milošević’s regime put a demand on the media to incite hatred, the “freed” media

after the democratic changes continued to use hate-speech “in order to please the taste of the public at large” (Spaić 2005, 247). She pointed out that the remnants of the hate speech from the times of Milošević regime are present mainly as stereotypes against minorities. Xenophobia and hate speech turned towards the international community can be found in some journalistic opinion pieces, she noticed, while the official statements by the politicians are entirely correct in that regard.

In a comprehensive overview of the approaches and literature on the media and nationalism encompassing West and East Europe, including the countries of former Yugoslavia, Mihelj (2008) catalogs literature dealing with nationalism in the media, including the representation of various 'national others'. She pointed to the fact that literature overwhelmingly deals with “instances of hate speech and stereotypes of various national others” (Mihelj 2008, 11), and suggested as useful a research approach focusing on the most banal manifestations of nationalism in mass communication (Mihelj 2008, 13), particularly related to the shift to capitalist media economy in Eastern Europe. This recognition of a niche to be filled in research is supported by the overview of the existing literature, which this paper provides. This niche is precisely where the present project fits into.

Looking Inward – Neighbors or Foreigners?

Along with the discourse analysis, this research examines the quantity of the coverage of Serbia and Croatia in each other's press nowadays relative to the domestic and foreign coverage, and its key journalistic features (topics, size/genre of items, key protagonists etc.). The aim is to get a full view of how the neighbors are represented. Therefore, it is worth examining related research on the representation of the neighbors nowadays. First, to answer how much coverage of the neighbor there is, it is worth looking at the phenomenon in the region and worldwide.

Despite the proclaimed unity that held former Yugoslavia together, in a comprehensive study of the politics of mass-media of the country, Robinson (1977) already in the 1970s detects an inward-looking trend of the media along the regional lines. The decentralized television system, broadcast from the capitals of the republics, featured 50% items from the republics, and 50% items that covered national and international issues (Robinson 1977, 191). She also noticed that although Serbs and Croats shared a mutual language, only 2% of Croats read press coming from Serbia (Robinson 1977, 191). The media agenda was dominantly influenced by political elites, while the laws of the market or audience needs did not play a noteworthy role, resulting in coverage focusing on the local rather than the national due to the divisions along ethnic lines (Robinson 1977, 192). Thus she argued that the media content in former Yugoslavia “tends to encourage regionalism and fosters hermetic points of view” (Robinson 1977, 192). Sofos (1999, 164-165) also noticed the segmentation of the former Yugoslav public sphere in the 1970s along geographic borders of the republics considering that each republic had its own press and that broadcasting system (the latter was centrally coordinated). This led to the media spheres of each republic being increasingly introspective, which was a fertile ground for “demarcating national and ethnic boundaries in the social imaginaries of the post-Yugoslav order” (Sofos 1999, 165).

Many authors agree that foreign news reporting is on decline world-wide since the collapse of Communism (see, for example: Wolter 2006 ; Franks 2006) while it is becoming increasingly important with the globalization and the complexity of international relations in the post 9/11 world (Franks 2006). Bertrand (1997, 70) labels it a “sad tradition”, and notes the astonishing fact that 60-70% of U.S. dailies are occupied by advertisements, while only 2% of content consists of foreign news. In France, Bertrand (1997, 70) notes, regional dailies resemble bulletins with a couple of pages devoted to national and international affairs. Paradoxically, with the virtual shrinking of time and place due to technological

advancements, it is easier than ever to find out what is happening outside of the borders of one's country (Wolter 2006; Franks 2006); nevertheless, the media are increasingly inward-looking. The reasons are to be found in the changes in the way news reporting is conducted, predominantly because of increased cost of foreign news production since the end of the Cold War, estimated at twice the cost of the production of home news (Franks 2006). This leads to a trend of shutting down bureaus in foreign countries and curtailing resident foreign correspondents as a quick money-saving measure (Franks 2006; Bertrand 1997, 70). Malović (2004, 39) also stresses the cost of acquiring international news as the essential reason behind the weakening of foreign reporting, which leads to newsrooms using news agencies as main sources. Another reason for the decline of foreign news reporting after the Cold War is to be found in the sudden complexity of narratives that emerged after the long-lasting, dominant and straightforward Cold War narrative of the battle of East versus West (Franks 2006).

Wolter (2006) stresses the agenda-setting effects of foreign news that are stronger than those of domestic news as the former have the power of often being the only source of information about the world and thus the power to influence how we perceive the world and peoples that are different than our own. She cites 'low public interest' for international news as a reason for its reduction, but claims that it is not the audience as such that is disinterested. Rather, she takes into consideration a possibility that the shifting news agenda, which curtails resident correspondents due to the imperative of profitability, leads to a lower quality of foreign news, which in turn triggers reduced audience interest.

“Indicator of Public Interest: Monitoring and analysis of TV news programs in 10 SEENPM countries” is a rare research in the region of South East Europe, conducted in 2007, which provides results on the quantity of the media coverage of neighbors nowadays. It shows a general trend of the dominance of domestic news reporting, followed by foreign news, while the quantity of the coverage of neighboring countries is comparatively low, averaging on 8 %

of the prime-time news items¹². The Croatian public service broadcaster devotes 5 % of items to the neighbors, 61% to domestic news, and 32% to other countries. The analyzed commercial TV in Croatia devotes 7% of items to the neighbors, 57% to domestic news, and 26% to other countries (Car 2007, 106). Majority of news on the neighbors come from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Car 2007, 98). The Serbian public service broadcaster has 9% of items covering neighboring countries, while 61% of items cover Serbia including Kosovo, and 31% other countries. The commercial broadcaster has 10% of items on the neighbors, 65% on Serbia including Kosovo, and 25% on other countries (Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007, 214). Croatia is the most frequently covered country among the neighboring ones, and the topics are almost exclusively related to war crimes (Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007, 214). It is hard to conclude whether the coverage of war crimes is high on the agenda of the Serbian and Croatian broadcasters or not, as it generally ranks after domestic and international politics and before meagerly represented topics such as education, science, religion etc. It is, however, similarly represented in terms of quantity in both Croatian and Serbian broadcasters, occupying 7- 10% of the prime-time news items¹³ (Car 2007, 103; Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007, 211). However, a further analysis of the figures as to the underlying factors for such representation is not provided in the study. The position of journalists in the Serbian broadcast media, as reflected in the items of negative content, is generally neutral. It is noted, though, that the public broadcaster in Serbia focuses its coverage

¹² The average calculated by the author of this paper excluded the outliers – Montenegro with 23% of items on the neighboring countries on the public broadcaster and 57% on the commercial one, as well as Romania with 0% on both broadcasters. The study does not provide the analysis as to the factors influencing such quantity of coverage of the neighbors in the two cases.

¹³ The topic of war crimes occupies 8% of the items on the Croatian public service broadcaster, ranking after domestic politics (20%), world affairs (23%) and the category 'other' (20%), and 7% of items on the commercial television, ranking after domestic politics (16%), world affairs (18%) and the category 'other' (34%) (Car 2007, 103). War crimes get 7% coverage on the Serbian public broadcaster, after country's international politics (21%), world affairs (17%), domestic politics (9%), 'other' (16%) and economy/business (11%). The commercial television B92, which sees dealing with the past as a part of its mission, devotes 10% of items to war crimes, after country's domestic (15%) and international politics (18%), world affairs (10%) and 'other' news (22%) (Valić Nedeljković 2007, 211).

of wartime events on the plight of Serbs (for instance, in the coverage of the military operation "Bljesak" in Croatia), and the journalists in this cases "take an extremely negative stand", accompanied by sympathy for the victims (Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007, 219; Udovičić 2007, 21). The discourse regarding the issue of the independence of Kosovo is marked by the deep discord between Serbia and the international community, and the discursive model "we and them" is applied, "where 'we' are always right, and 'their' stands are unlawful and contrary to the international standards..." (Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007, 228).

For the sake of comparison with an EU country, it is worth mentioning that the findings of the same study regarding prime-time news on Hungarian television stations show that these devote only 5% of news items (public broadcaster) and 3% (commercial broadcaster) to neighboring countries, despite Hungarian minority presence in them. Foreign news occupy some 16% of the coverage on the public broadcaster and 29% on the commercial one, while domestic coverage reigns supreme with 79% of items on the public broadcaster and 68% on the commercial one (Bajomi-Lázár 2007, 114 - 116). The author concludes that the lack of foreign news in prime time may be a cause of concern considering "the current trends of globalization and europeanization" as it triggers the question whether a viewer informed in such a manner is able to "put information in an adequate context" (Bajomi-Lázár 2007, 123).

Students of the High College of Journalism of the Media Plan Institute in Sarajevo carried a monitoring of daily newspapers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia & Montenegro and Croatia in 2004 in order to show how these neighbors see one another. The authors point out the limitations of the research (primarily a 3-week consecutive sample), and notice that the findings can thus be seen as "indications, rather than research findings" (Media Plan High College of Journalism 2005). The report does not feature an academic analysis of

the findings or a systematic discourse analysis. Furthermore, the report on Serbia does not include summaries of data and is thus hard to draw conclusions from it. Some findings on the Croatian press are worth mentioning: the coverage of Serbia and BiH by Croatian press is still dominated by the conflicts among these countries in various areas (e.g. minority rights, inter-ethnic rights, war crimes) although the press is gradually beginning to show interest into “post-conflict areas of cooperation”, such as economy, culture or sports. Yet, even these areas are sometimes “areas of symbolic conflict” in the press (Media Plan High College of Journalism 2005). Short journalistic forms are dominant, mainly news items and reports, while more elaborate forms are extremely rare. A neutral journalistic stance towards subject matter of the items prevails. (Media Plan High College of Journalism 2005).

Ownership and News values influencing coverage of 'the neighbor'

In order to establish what underlying factors may be linked to the representation of 'the neighbor', the research primarily examines the link between media ownership, related interests in the profit, and resulting news values. Although the literature on the media in South East Europe emphasizes the influence of the ownership on media independence (see, for example, Petković 2004; Malović 2004; Malović 2005), we are here concerned with the implications of the ownership on the journalistic practice embodied in the news values that could be contributing factors to how 'the neighbor' is represented.

In the above reviewed literature examining the shrinking foreign news coverage and the low amount of coverage of the neighboring countries, we are effectively implying that media should serve the people in terms of providing them with the opportunity to learn about and better understand one another, which in turn promotes mutual understanding and cooperation under shared principles and understanding (Bertrand 1997, 71). According to Bertrand (1997, 18), “*offering a picture of the world*” is one of the key functions that media

should perform. He stresses that it is primarily through the media that we acquire the knowledge of the world: “For a common person, most of the world, people and issues that media do not talk about simply do not exist” (Bertrand 1997, 18). In other words, journalists have a duty to inform the public in accordance with their human rights to “accurate, complete, understandable, useful etc. information” (Bertrand 1997: 28). This function of the media, known as *public service* in the European media context, would have to be reconciled with two others for a proper role of the media in a democratic society: “contribution to the happiness”, as a mechanism of reduction of psychological tension, and “sales”, understood as an imperative of the media in a commercial market whereby they need to attract the audience in order to “sell” it to advertisers (Bertrand 1997, 19). However, the media today are mainly owned by large companies and corporations whose main goal is not the *public service* (Bertrand 1997, 30). Bertrand (1997, 30) cites an owner of the Wall Street Journal: “Newspapers are private companies which do not owe anything to their users because the users do not authorize the newspaper in any way. Therefore, they are by no means a public service”.

The roles focused on the entertainment and sales seem to be hard to reconcile with providing quality information about the world at large within the *public service* role in the cases of the Serbian and Croatian newspapers analyzed in this research due to their ownership and related news values. The quality newspapers (*Vjesnik* and *Politika*) avoid *tabloidization*¹⁴, but they are trapped between the true *public service* role and the dependence on the state and representation of its attitudes considering that the state has 100% ownership over *Vjesnik* and 50% in *Politika* (Šabić 2009; Samardžija 2009; Matić 2004; Vujović and Ličina 2008). Tabloids, on the other hand are privately owned and their key goal is profit generation (Ivanuš

¹⁴ *Tabloidization* is to be understood as “a spill-over of tabloid news values from the popular to the quality press” (Esser 1999, 293), a common trend around the world, which involves “adoption of typical tabloid strategies – such as personalization, sentimentalism, a taste for sensationalism and scandal, the accent on presenting information as entertainment” (Spasov 2004, 17).

2009; Odavić 2009). *Press* is a limited company, owned by a local share-holder and a company registered in Limasol, Cyprus¹⁵, but more detailed information on the ownership is not available. *24 Sata* is owned by the Austrian company *Styria*, which is present in the media markets of other countries in the region as well.

Both *Politika* and *Vjesnik* take pride in being quality newspapers with a long tradition, which made them important institutions in their respective societies (Samardžija 2009; Šabić 2009). Despite the elusiveness of the definition of quality press, we here adopt the one by Sparks (2004) as “large format newspapers that report news in depth, often with serious tone and higher level language. News is dominated by national and international events, politics, business, with less emphasis on celebrities and gossip”. *Politika* and *Vjesnik* focus on political processes, feature analysis, interviews and other longer and more sophisticated forms and genres than those found in the tabloids, and have a tradition of strong foreign news reporting. The advent of tabloids in the regional media markets, such as the analyzed *24 Sata* and *Press*, ushered in a model of *news as a commodity* (McQuail 2002, 275), that is a purely market-driven model of journalism. According to the market theory of news production, in such an environment the probability that an event or issue is considered news is “inversely proportional to the harm the information might cause investors or sponsors...”, “inversely proportional to the cost of uncovering and reporting it”, and “directly proportional to the expected breadth of appeal of the story to audiences advertisers will pay to reach” (McQuail 2002, 271-272). Such an approach is evident in Serbian and Croatian tabloids, which favor soft news over hard news, putting into the focus individuals in bizarre or adverse situations, “sensational information about the private life of prominent people” (Malović and Vilović

¹⁵ Several interviewed media professionals from Serbia claimed that the ownership of the tabloid *Press* is not transparent and basically unknown. The ownership data for *Press* can be found in the database of the Serbian Agency for Commercial Registries (<http://pretraga.apr.gov.rs/RepsisPublicSite/Search/GeneralEnterpriseSearch.aspx>), accessed June 1, 2009. One shareholder of the company Press Publishing Group is an individual Đorđe Stefanović, while the other is company Amber Press Limited, registered in Limasol, Cyprus. Establishing the ownership of this company would require extensive additional research through international company records, which is beyond the scope of this thesis, and best left to investigative reporters.

2004, 95), and generally ignoring analytical approach to events and processes, including political ones. It stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from the idea of “public enlightenment” as a goal of journalism considering that such an aim conflicts with the goal of maximizing profits (McQuail 2002, 273). The “non-revenue” journalistic goal (McQuail 1992, 86), which adheres to covering domestic politics and foreign news, is more interested in maintaining influence in the society than in expanding the audience or increasing advertising revenues (McQuail 1992: 86). Such an approach is evident in the analyzed quality newspapers *Vjesnik* and *Politika*. *Vjesnik* is not compelled to adhere to the strict market logic considering the role of the state in the ownership (Šabić 2009) and associated priorities, which are to make it representative of governmental attitudes. This editorial position of *Vjesnik* is accompanied by low circulation¹⁶ (Malović and Vilović 2004, 104). Although the development of quality press in Serbia is hampered by scant resources – in terms of finances, professional staff and technology (Matić 2004, 271), *Politika* is cited as a rare example of a quality newspaper that, under the new 50% owner, German company WAZ, and the 50% state ownership, manages to maintain its professional standards and quality, avoiding tabloidization (Matić 2004: 271).

The Role of the Media in Post-Conflict Societies

Proportional to its role in reproducing hatred stirred in a strategic way by political elites in former Yugoslavia, which lead to and justified “the worst atrocities in Europe since the end of World War II” (Kurspahić 2003, 218), the media now have power to help overcome it in order to create a constructive relationship and peaceful coexistence between the former parties in the conflict to take place. This process is usually referred to as *truth and reconciliation*. It presupposes *facing the past*, where media can play a crucial role in

¹⁶ Circulation figures, which differ depending on the sources, are provided in the description of the newspaper in the section with the findings and the interpretation of the content analysis.

presenting the truth about atrocities on all the sides, and particularly making sure that the domestic public is presented with the information about ‘our own’ crimes. Nevertheless, whether the media see this as their mission is another issue. As the previously reviewed literature demonstrates, the *silence* about our crimes and the insistence on ‘our’ victims and ‘their’ perpetrators seems still to be a dominant pattern. Kurspahić (2003, 219) notes: “As long as this is so, not only the history, but also the future of the region will be vulnerable to nationalist distortions and the accumulation of hatreds for new tensions and conflicts” as atrocities not only from the war of the 1990s, but from the World War II and the times of the Turkish rule hundreds of years ago will continue to be invoked in a spiral of hatred. He advocates “acknowledging and honoring the victims on all sides, examining the records of atrocities, and neither denying crimes nor blaming everyone equally” (Kurspahić 2003, 219) as a sound basis for reconciliation in the region.

Reljić (2001, 8) sees the role of the media in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in the preservation of peace as a function of several social factors: 1) political context, which requires rule of law; 2) economic conditions, whereby media should be autonomous from the state ownership and control; 3) quality of journalism, where hate speech and representation of the interests and stances of the political elite should be replaced by “critical and analytical reporting” (Reljić 2001, 8); 4) attitudes of the public, where an educated public, enlightened in a democratic tradition, can critically reflect on the negative modes of representation of ‘the other’ and thus oppose a potentially detrimental media influence. The successful functioning of this model is conditional on the existence of each of the four elements at least to an extent. “In short, no element can exert its full weight if the others are lacking or flawed” (Reljić 2001, 8). For instance, considerable effort and funding invested in journalists' training and improving the technical and organizational resources of media in the region since the war, which is seen by Reljić (2001, 8) as the best basis for

introducing higher journalistic standards, will not yield sufficient results “as long as extremists call the political tune”, or if the economy of a country is not sound and thus reflects on the media market. Kurspahić (2003, 218) stresses the importance of a competitive media market so as to lessen the dependence on public funding and related forms of control over media in the long run.

Universal News Values

Despite the differences in news values between the quality press and the tabloids, some values are universal to journalistic and editorial practice around the world. We should examine them in order to get the full understanding of the coverage of ‘the neighbors’ in the Serbian and Croatian press.

The seminal work of Galtung and Ruge (1965), analyzing Norwegian press, identifies a set of interrelated factors which impact the selection of foreign news. These are: *scale of events* (intensity); *unambiguity* (clarity); *meaningfulness* (significance); *cultural proximity* (closeness); *consonance with past news* (news that are in accordance with audience expectations based on prior reporting); *unexpectedness* and *unpredictability* (however, within the limits of what is familiar- McQuail 1994, 270); *scarcity*; *reference to persons*; *reference to elite nations and people*; *reference to something negative* (elements of drama and action); *continuity* (reporting on the events which were already reported on and proved newsworthy). The authors confirmed their hypothesis that the more of the above mentioned features a news item has, the more likely it is to become news. For instance, news about *negative events*, involving drama or action, such as disasters or crime, will often have individuals as their protagonists (*reference to people*), they are *unexpected* and *unpredictable*, satisfy the value of *continuity*, and are big in terms of the *intensity* scale.

Graber (1989, 84-85) stresses 5 main news values that are commonly shared among U.S. media. First, the news has to produce a strong *impact* on the recipients. Second, she identifies conflicts, scandals, human violence and natural disasters as high on the news agenda as values implying *negativity* and *drama*. The third category of news values is *familiarity* - issues that people are familiar with and used to in some way – be it famous people as news protagonists or common situations that many can identify with. Fourth is the *proximity* of the event in geographic terms. Finally, the *immediateness* – the news have to be up-to-date, recent, that is – fresh and new. Westerstahl and Johansson (1994, 73-74) stress *importance*, *proximity* and *drama* as key values in the case of foreign news reporting. The importance of the news is, however, a value that seems to be context-dependent, whereby media can rely on the actual needs and wishes of the audiences and their understanding of what is important or can assume the needs of the audience in terms of the news importance.

McQuail (1994, 271) explains *news bias* as an interpretative framework that does not apply exclusively to foreign news, but has a universal application and accounts for the selection of events that will be reported or ignored. *Proximity* is, again, an important value, as “news will tend not to deal with distant and politically unimportant nations” (McQuail 1994, 271). Other ‘valuable’ news are those dealing with *elites*, be it elite “ideas, institutions or structures” (McQuail 1994, 271), *dramatic processes* that are long-term and *negative news*. McQuail (1994, 271) cites Rosengren’s (1974) observation that *political* and *economic* factors influence some features of news flows. Particularly, he mentions how “flow of trade between countries are good predictors of mutual news attention” (McQuail 1994, 271). Another factor influencing news values is the *subjectivity* of the actual news selectors, i.e. the values that they perceive as important (McQuail 1994, 271). Considering that the “judgments of news value are often relative and based on a journalistic ‘feel for news’ at the particular moments, there will usually be strong elements of subjectivity”, McQuail (1994, 271) concludes.

Content Analysis – Findings and Discussion

In order to place the findings and interpretation into the context of each newspaper analyzed, it is important to understand the background and general features of coverage that these daily editions offer. The following descriptions of the analyzed newspapers were obtained from a combination of literature, interviews with the editors, and independent sources closely familiar with the media landscape in the region, while some of the insights into the basic features of their reporting practices are based on the researcher's analysis conducted as a part of this project.

Background information on the analyzed newspapers

Politika

The oldest daily in Serbia and one of the oldest in the Balkans, established in 1904, *Politika* is one of the two quality dailies in Serbia¹⁷. It was the third best selling daily in Serbia according to data from May 2008 (Vujović and Ličina 2008, 427). Its current average circulation is 70.000 - 80.000 on workdays and up to 150.000 on weekends due to the TV guide supplement (Samardžija 2009). Focused on politics, and free of sensationalism, it adheres to high professional standards (Matić 2004, 271). Its reputation is that of a conservative newspaper, traditionally read by an educated, but older audience. The readership consists mainly of the middle-aged population and pensioners, although the numbers of younger readers has begun to rise as of last year, especially among young professionals (Samardžija 2009). The German media group *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (WAZ) now owns 50% of the *Politika* company, while the other 50% is controlled by the state through

¹⁷ *Danas* is the other quality daily published in the capital. Its circulation is significantly smaller than *Politika*'s.

public enterprises which own portions of the company (Matić 2004, 271). After the democratic coalition won the last parliamentary elections in Serbia towards the end of 2008, the leadership and the editorial team were changed in a move by the new government. After the role *Politika* played as a mouthpiece of the Milošević regime in the 1990s, it has been re-establishing its reputation. However, audience surveys show that some people are not ready yet to forgive its role in the 1990s (Matić 2004, 271).

It is a long tradition of *Politika* to devote first three to four pages to international news, a remnant from the times of the former Yugoslavia, when *Politika* had a wide network of permanent correspondents around the world. Nowadays the international pages include news from the region. *Politika* features longer articles, analytical pieces, interviews, commentaries and op-ed pieces, which testifies to its in-depth approach to news as a quality newspaper in a tabloid-dominated market. Tabloid-like content, such as show-business, is virtually absent from *Politika*.

Press

This daily tabloid appeared in the market at the end of 2005. The ownership structure is unclear, as one of the two shareholders is a company registered in Cyprus whose ownership, in turn, has not been investigated so far. According to the figure disclosed in the newspaper, daily circulation is around 140.000 copies. The target audience of the print daily is the population between twenty and fifty years old, who favor simple content, critical towards the authorities, as well as reading about show business, entertainment and sports (Odavić 2009).

Although a tabloid in format and with many features of a classical tabloid in terms of content, *Press* covers politics and economy, unlike the Croatian tabloid *24 Sata*. Again, unlike *24 Sata*, it does not feature mainly short news items, but also longer news items, (up to ½ a

page), as well as shorter and longer articles (up to one page), and occasional interviews. Unlike in the case of *24 Sata*, the items show news-gathering work by journalists in terms of detailed information and multiple sources interviewed. However, sensationalist items featuring compromising information about politicians are not uncommon. Stories about organized crime often dominate front pages. Show-business, unusual events and bizarre news around the world, lifestyle and sports comprise approximately a half of the content.

24 Sata

This Croatian tabloid, both in the format and in content, established in March 2005, is owned by the Austrian media company *Styria* and is the best selling daily in Croatia, with some 120.000 copies sold daily (Ivanuš 2009). It aims to cater to a wide readership in Croatia and has managed to attract young people between 10 and 29 who do not read newspapers otherwise (Ivanuš 2009). There are virtually no serious political issues covered in *24 Sata*. In fact, the editors openly claim the apolitical nature of *24 Sata* (Ivanuš 2009). Political news are scant, short news items, briefly outlining the event in no more than a couple of sentences, and often without sources quoted. The majority of important political developments, covered by other, more serious newspapers, are absent from *24 Sata*.

24 Sata is a tabloid in every sense of the word, with no ideological preferences. It is people, accidents, tragedies and bizarre events that dominate the "news". Politicians are most often treated as show-business personalities, rather than protagonists of relevant political events. Thus we find out about an allegedly humorous nature of greeting between two high-level European politicians, but nothing about the actual meeting of when or why it took place. Approximately a half of the newspaper is devoted to sports, lifestyle and show-business. Advertisements often occupy whole pages.

Vjesnik

Established in the 1940s, *Vjesnik* has been under full ownership by the state since World War II to this day. It is funded from the state budget and from the advertisements mainly placed by state-owned companies. It reflects the viewpoints and interests of the ruling political establishment. With the upsurge of tabloid media after the war, and due to the fact that some respectable journalists and editors left *Vjesnik*, the daily has suffered a blow in terms of circulation. It is estimated at 10.000 – 20.000 daily by circulation-monitoring agencies (Vujović and Ličina 2008), while the editor in the interview conducted for the research cited an imprecise figure of “somewhere below 60.000” (Šabić 2009). Despite the low circulation and having in mind that it is the only clear-cut case of a quality newspaper in Croatia, *Vjesnik* is an appropriate for choice for the present research. *Vjesnik* is very similar with *Politika* in terms of journalistic quality and space devoted to covering political issues, both domestic and international. Social issues, education, tourism, environment are also featured. It cherishes longer journalistic forms, as well as analyses and opinion pieces. It is free of tabloid-like content.

How much of 'the neighbor' is there in the press?

The first question to answer when it comes to the coverage of 'the neighbor' is the key quantitative one - how much coverage of the region there is compared to foreign news and domestic news coverage? I looked at the average count of the total number of articles in each newspaper and the numbers of items covering individual neighboring countries¹⁸, more than one country of the region including Serbia (in the Croatian press) and Croatia (in the Serbian

¹⁸ Neighboring countries are understood as those within the region of the Western Balkans, i.e. Croatia (in the Serbian press), Serbia (in the Croatian press), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania. Romania and Bulgaria were coded as individual EU countries.

press), individual EU countries, those that cover EU as a single political entity, items that cover other individual countries of the world (coded as ‘other countries’), and those that report on global issues affecting the whole world (coded as ‘world’), such as the global economic crisis or global warming. The category ‘other’ comprises items that do not deal with any country in particular (such as items in the realm of lifestyle).

In the case of *Press*, 5 items on average cover neighboring countries, which is some 5% of the total number of items in an issue (excluding sports). The majority of content is focused on Belgrade and Serbia, while there is a notable shortage of coverage of individual EU countries and EU as a collective entity. Items covering global topics, such as the economic crisis, are also meagerly represented (see *Chart 1*).

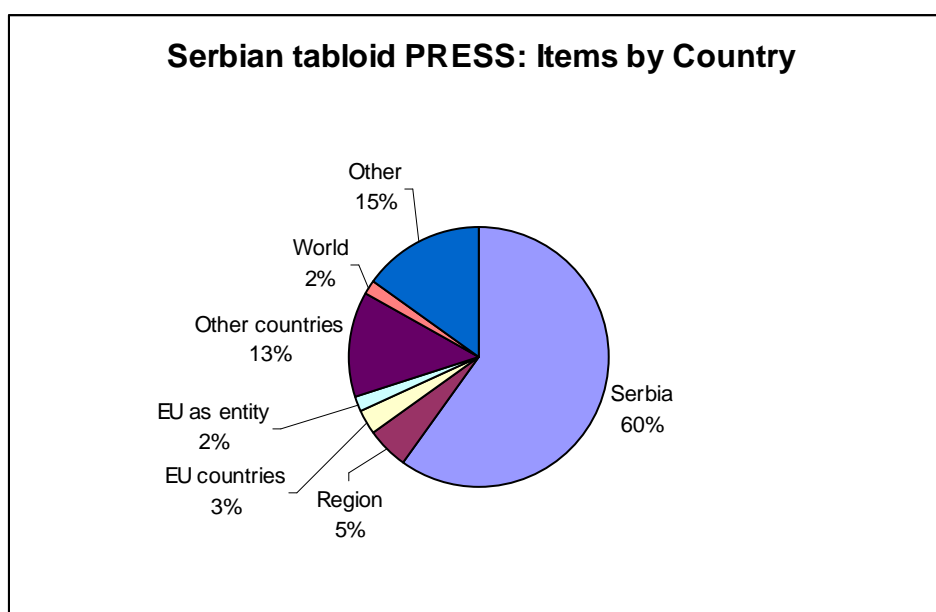


Chart 1

The situation is similar in *Politika*, with the average of 5 items covering the neighboring countries, which is roughly 5% of the total number of items (excluding sports). A

similar shortage of items on EU countries¹⁹ and the world as a whole is notable despite the newspaper's tradition of foreign news reporting (see *Chart 2*).

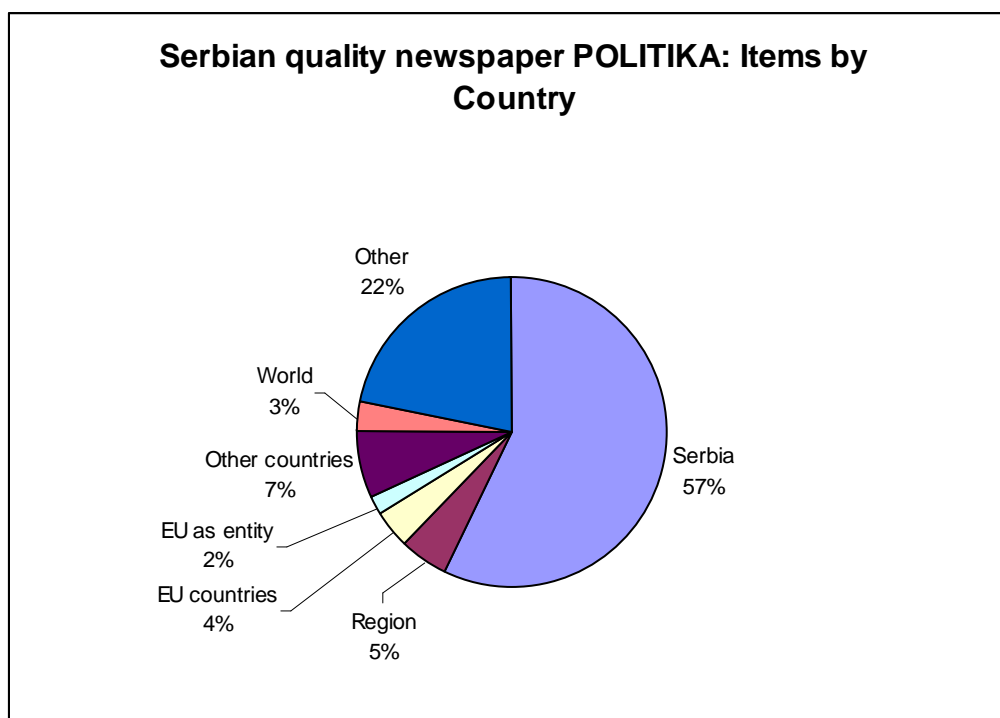


Chart 2

Although the amount of the coverage of the region in the Croatian tabloid *24 Sata* is in line with the findings in the other newspapers, it seems at the first glance that it provides significantly more coverage of individual EU countries and other countries of the world than the Serbian *Press* at the expense of the domestic coverage. However, one should not be quick to assume a more substantial dedication to the outward look of the daily in this case. Namely, the subject matter of the items in *24 Sata* seldom brings any substantive information in foreign coverage. Instead, it mainly 'represents' the countries of the EU and the world through bizarre events or sensationalist details about politicians and other personalities rather than by covering issues and events that would be considered newsworthy in a quality newspaper.

¹⁹ As for the neighboring countries which are EU members, in all the 14 issues of *Press* and *Politika* analyzed for this research, only 2 items about Romania were identified, both about the impact of Romania on Serbia, 2 about Bulgaria and 2 about Slovenia.

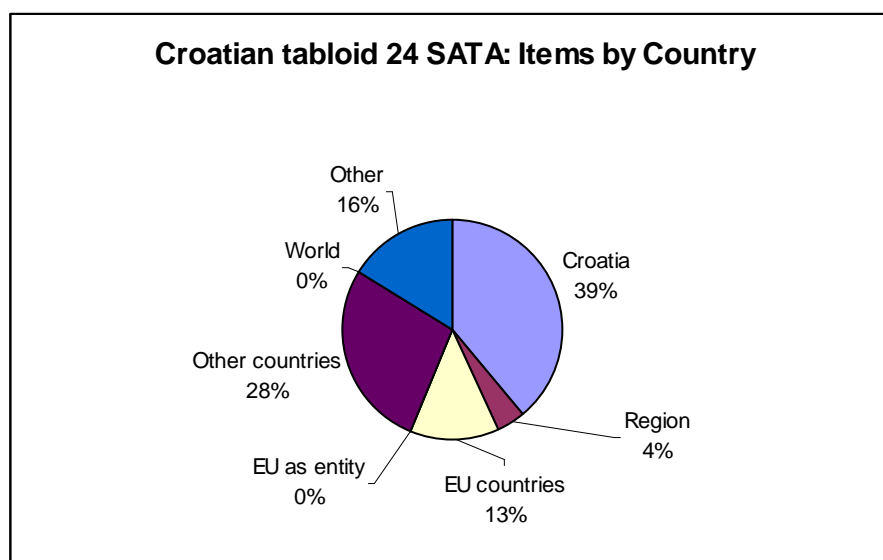


Chart 3

The Croatian quality newspaper *Vjesnik* is in line with the Serbian newspapers in terms of the quantity of the coverage, with an average of 5 items covering countries of the region, which amounts to some 4% of the total coverage. The quantity of the coverage of other countries is similar to the findings in the other analyzed newspapers as well.

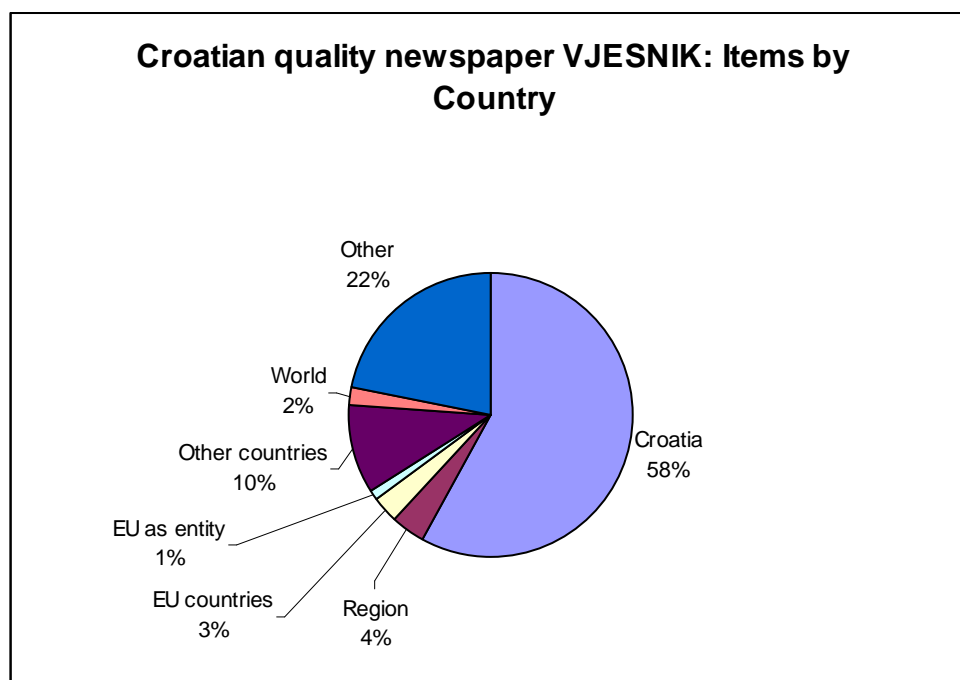


Chart 4

The findings are strikingly similar to those of a similar study done in the region in 2007, which analyzed the quantity of foreign coverage and the coverage of neighboring countries in TV news, and was previously explained in detail in this paper (Udovičić, Radenko ed. 2007. *Indicator of Public Interest: Monitoring and analysis of TV news programs in 10 SEENPM countries*). The dominance of the domestic coverage and low quantity of foreign news coverage and that of neighbors is also in line with the global inward-looking news practice, as identified by many authors (see Wolter 2006; Franks 2006; Bertrand 1997; Car 2007; Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007; Malović 2004). Serbia and Croatia are clearly no exception in the region or the world in that respect.

The interviews with the editors of the analyzed newspapers provided one key explanation for this: they all claimed that their markets are local, restricted to the borders of their respective countries. Thus, their perception of the audience's needs is that they first wish to know “what is going on in their own backyard, and only then do they want to look across the fence” (Ivanuš 2009). On the one hand, such an approach seems justified in the case of newspapers with high circulations as the practice seems to prove such an editorial standpoint. On the other hand, considering that practically no audience surveys are taken into account in the formulation of editorial policies in any of the analyzed newspapers, as interviews with the editors showed, it seems that the *subjectivity* of news selectors, i.e. the values that they perceive as important (McQuail 1994: 271) is an important factor in this case determining the coverage of neighbors and foreign coverage.

How much of Serbia and Croatia in each other's press?

As for the number of items covering Croatia in the Serbian press and Serbia in Croatian press, the figures among the newspapers are very similar, all being in the close vicinity of 2%. There is no visible variation between tabloids and quality newspapers, nor

between the countries. *Press* features 2% items on Croatia (2 items on average per issue), *24 Sata* is close with 2.10% items on Serbia, while *Politika* features 2.10% items on Croatia on average, and 2.27% of *Vjesnik* items cover Serbia. The figures point to a uniform trend of a similar quantity of items covering Serbia in Croatia in each other's press, with no notable difference between tabloids and quality newspapers.

Although the figures can be interpreted as low, it is only relative to the coverage of other neighbors, as well as the foreign coverage that they can be understood better, which is discussed in detail in the following section. However, considering the high representation relative to other neighbors, it is reasonable to claim that the countries are relatively high on each other's news agenda.

The most 'popular' neighbors

Press

Montenegro is the most featured among the neighboring countries in *Press* (16 items out of 36), followed by Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (each represented by 5 out of 36 items). The main reason for such interest in Montenegro by *Press*, cited by the editor Odavić (2009), is in the fact that the links between the vibrant Montenegrin organized crime and the Serbian criminal milieu are very attractive to this tabloid prone to the coverage of crime. Also, the daily is sold in Montenegro, but Odavić (2009) claims that there is no significant effort by the editors to cover Montenegro due to the minute circulation of the tabloid distributed in that country. Drawing on Galtung and Ruge (1965) and related work on news values (Graber 1989; Westerstahl and Johansson 1994), we can see this as an example the interaction of the news values of *cultural proximity*, *drama* and *negative events* influencing coverage of a neighboring country. These universal news values overlap in this case with the generally

recognized strong preference of tabloids for crime. Also, there seems to be a subjective reason on the part of the editors at play here. Namely, as Montenegro became independent from Serbia relatively recently, in 2006, there seems to be a habit still to treat it as "closer" to Serbia than other neighboring countries (Odavić 2009). Items covering the other neighbors in *Press* are located mainly on the 'international' pages, while the coverage of Montenegro is more evenly distributed across the newspaper.

The newspaper targets a broad audience in Serbia, which determines its simple style of writing and simple journalistic forms, as well as the choice of issues and topics covered. The choice of topics is dictated by the tabloid nature of *Press*. As the interviewed editor put it: “We are interested in tabloid topics: blood, tears, sweat, crime, show-business gossip, political gossip, corruption” (Odavić 2009). Being a tabloid, the newspaper does not have “a passion for analysis” (Odavić 2009). Due to the relative ease of collecting such information from agency news and on-line sources, as well as through exchange with the Croatian tabloid *24 Sata*, there has never been an initiative to develop a network of correspondents. In case of bigger events, a journalist in the neighboring country is hired ad-hoc to cover it.

The editor interviewed for the research recognized the strong links between countries in the region, including those between Serbia and Croatia. These are “crime, economy, and people’s destinies” (Odavić 2009). However, he claims that the media, including *Press*, do not pay enough attention to these links between the countries in the coverage of the region and remain enclosed in their own backyards.

Although *Press* does not do surveys of the readerships’ needs, they track audience reactions ad-hoc, through letters and calls to the newsroom, as well as the changes in circulation, which to some extent determines their coverage of the neighbors (Odavić 2009). Namely, writing about Croatia often triggers negative reactions by the readers, which makes *Press* shun away from covering the country (Odavić 2009). Economic reasons, such as current

pay-cuts due to the economic crisis, do not affect the coverage of the region or Croatia (Odavić 2009).

Politika

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most featured neighbors in *Politika* (12 and 10 items respectively out of 35), followed by Montenegro (8 items). There are much starker differences among the number of items that cover countries of the region in both *Vjesnik* and *24 Sata* than in the Serbian press. The most covered country is Serbia (with 22 items out of 34 in *Vjesnik* and 13 out of 24 in *24 Sata*), followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (with 5 items in *Vjesnik* and 8 in *24 Sata*). Macedonia has 2 items in both dailies, while Montenegro and Albania get hardly any coverage in *Vjesnik* (1 item each), and none in *24 Sata*. No items were found covering Albania in either of the Serbian newspapers.

The target audience of *Politika* are natives of Serbia as well as those who came to live in it as a consequence of migrations during and after the wars of the 1990s, including ethnic Serb refugees from Croatia, and thus have ties with the former Yugoslav republics, Croatia included (Samardžija 2009). Additionally, it addresses older audience members, who have lived in the former Yugoslavia. However, the perceived needs of the audience are mainly judged ‘‘by the instincts’’ of the editors (Samardžija 2009), considering that audience surveys are neither regularly or competently done, and consequently do not reach editors so as to influence their decisions (Samardžija 2009). Neither is the two-way communication of the newsroom with the readership such that could yield useful pointers as to their real needs. The interviewed editor insists that the problem of the generally low coverage of the region and Croatia ‘‘is not in the audience, but in us, the newspaper’’ considering that the editors are led by highly subjective and instinctive estimate of what the audience would want to read (Samardžija 2009).

However, the main reason for the quantity and type of reporting about Croatia is in the fact that *Politika* is still partially state-controlled and represents the state interest, which is put above the interests of the readers (Samardžija 2009). It is the interest of Serbia regarding the countries of the region that mainly determines the kind of coverage they get and will amend its reporting based on the reactions by state institutions (Samardžija 2009).

Coverage of Croatia is determined to an extent by the work habits of the permanent correspondent. The few permanent correspondents that *Politika* still keeps on a payroll have a great degree of independence and are not subject to close scrutiny by the editors in the newsroom. Thus their reporting sometimes assumes ‘a path of least resistance’ (Samardžija 2009), whereby some topics occasionally remain uncovered, and the pace of reporting is determined by the correspondent and not by the newsroom (Samardžija 2009). Additionally, economic reasons, primarily expensive printing and high cost of paper, have triggered a reduction in size of many sections of the newspaper, including the pages formerly devoted to the region (Samardžija 2009).

Due to all the above stated reasons, Samardžija (2009) is of opinion that former Yugoslav republics, including Croatia, on the pages of *Politika* nowadays have a status of foreign countries, just like any other country of the world despite the ties that link them. Nevertheless, Croatia is highest on *Politika*’s agenda compared to other neighbors. Additionally, the fact that the newspaper keeps a correspondent in Zagreb, despite a radical reduction in the number of correspondents, testifies to the relatively high interest of *Politika*’s compared to other neighbors. Additional explanations can be found in the statements by the interviewed editor of *Vjesnik*.

Vjesnik

According to him, Serbia is ‘‘closer’’ to Croatia than some other countries of the region due to the easy understanding between the two languages (formerly one, Serbo-

Croatian, before the break-up of the former Yugoslavia), the ongoing shared political processes and disputes, war crimes trials, and crisis situations, such as the recognition of Kosovo by Croatia (Šabić 2009). While political and economic ties between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were more intense in the period following the war, the relations with Serbia have intensified recently, particularly with the flow of capital between the two countries (Šabić 2009). Thus, the linguistic and geographic *proximity*, as a universal news value (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Graber 1989; Westerstahl and Johansson 1994), influence the coverage of this neighbor. The accompanying determinant of the coverage is clearly the intensity of political and economic relations, stressed by Rosengren (1974) as a good predictors of mutual news attention of two countries.

Similarly to *Politika*, *Vjesnik* is not a newspaper whose success is determined by the market, considering that it is owned by the state and receives funding from the state budget. Thus the reporting of *Vjesnik* is in tune with the state interests. The editorial focus being on long-term political processes, the coverage of neighboring countries is important to *Vjesnik* considering that a lot of processes involve the relations of Croatia with the region (Šabić 2009). The political importance of Serbia for *Vjesnik* is evident in the fact that the correspondent from Serbia is one of the two permanent foreign correspondents (the other one being in Bosnia and Herzegovina) whom the newspaper kept on the payroll. As a measure of cost reduction, the newsroom turned to agency news and on-line sources to replace the work of other correspondents (Šabić 2009).

Similarly as in the case of *Politika*, the initiative of the correspondent in Serbia, who is quite independent from the newsroom, influences the coverage of this neighbor to an extent. As the newsroom awaits the correspondents' initiative on the ground, the pace and type of reporting they send often takes the already mentioned "path of least resistance" (Šabić 2009) and the editors do not notice if the correspondent fails to cover an issue.

The last survey of the readership was done some four years ago, confirming that the newspaper was satisfying the needs of its audience (Šabić 2009). Considering that there have been no significant changes in the editorial policy since then, the assumption of the newsroom is that the needs of the audience are still met well, including the coverage of the region and Serbia. (Šabić 2009). In the absence of regular audience surveys, it is safe to conclude that the coverage of the region is partially determined by a subjective estimate of the editors of the readers' interests (see McQuail 1994, 271), similarly as in the case of *Politika*.

24 Sata

In the words of the editor-in-chief of *24 Sata*, the tabloid treats Serbia and other countries of the region equally to the rest of the world. What dictates coverage of a country is the subject matter of news, as long as it adheres to the tabloid standards. Politics is virtually absent from this newspaper. As the editor-in-chief put it, "it is the stories that are important, not where they come from" (Ivanuš 2009). This approach dictates the structure of the newspapers, which does not have designated sections for international news, and the organization of reporting units by topics and not by geographic parameters (i.e. there is no 'foreign news' unit), as well as the absence of the correspondents.

Although there are no regular surveys of the needs of the readership, the editor-in-chief claims that *24 Sata* is led by the needs of the readers in its editorial policy. The perception of the needs is based on monitoring the circulation, which is the highest in Croatia, as well as readers' reactions. Also, the impression is that a subjective estimate of the editors plays a role in the coverage of the neighbors. The editor-in-chief claims that the Croatian public used to be strongly opposed to stories coming from Serbia in the 1990s, with the war still very fresh in the memory. However, the mood has changed: "The readers are not allergic to Serbia any more. The emotions of our readers towards Serbia are not as strong, but still exist to some extent" (Ivanuš 2009).

Two main factors determine the coverage of Serbia in *24 Sata* – the commercial interest of the owner, which is successfully realized by the tabloid nature of the daily, and the perceived interest of the readers.

Contestation or Cooperation?

There are no significant discrepancies among the newspapers in the amount of coverage of Serbia or Croatia, which focuses only on the country or its regional and international links, as opposed to the amount of coverage of the links of any kind between Serbia and Croatia. By links I mean here any positive or negative, past or present influences or relations of one country on the other. There seems to be an approximately equal interest in covering the internal matters of the countries and their international affairs as that in covering the relations between Serbia and Croatia. As the editor of *Politika* explained, due to the fact that the analyzed edition of *Politika* is sold in Serbia only, the emphasis is on the stories about Croatia that concern people in Serbia, while those that are about Croatia only are usually reported only as long as they present an event or process that is of crisis nature or is negative for Croatia. A success of Croatia will not be reported (Samardžija 2009). The representation of the negative processes and events in Croatia is led primarily by the subjective estimate by the editors of what the audience would like to read (Samardžija 2009). However, looking from the perspective of universal news values, reporting on what is *negative* is one of the key news values anywhere (Galtung and Ruge 1965; Graber 1989).

The approach is similar in the tabloids. *Press* is interested in covering problems in the neighboring countries, including Croatia, that have an influence on Serbia. For instance, the problems of Serbs traveling to Croatia, succession of foreign currency after the breakup of Yugoslavia, inter-ethnic sports incidents or statements by leaders about war crimes (Odavić 2009). Similarly, *24 Sata* covers only those issues regarding Serbia that have direct practical

implications for the lives of people in Croatia (Ivanuš 2009) – whether Croatian citizens need visas for Serbia is a topic for *24 Sata*, but the country's increase in exports is not. Linking this 'gut feeling' of the editors with the theory, we can see that they are in fact led by the universal news value of *meaningfulness* (significance) of stories for the target audience (Galtung and Ruge 1965) or *importance* (Westerstahl and Johansson 1994), as the reader needs to relate as close as possible to the story for it to be newsworthy.

Interestingly, when we look only at those items which cover links between Serbia and Croatia, the links are overwhelmingly represented as either locus of contestation or cooperation, but hardly ever neutrally. Overall, there are more items that represent the links as locus of contestation. There are at least two reasons established for this on the basis of the interviews with the editors. First, the overwhelming majority of items which represent the links of the two countries as locus of contestation cover the topic of war crimes and dealing with the past. Thus, the results show that this topic contributes significantly to the representation of 'the neighbor' through the looking glass of the tension of unresolved issues. Secondly, as Samardžija (2009) put it: "What the Croats write about us and we about them is still at the level of a mild conflict on both sides". Implied here is the continued antagonism between the countries, reflected in the media, most likely as the consequence of subjective attitudes of the journalists and editors (see McQuail 1994, 271)²⁰. Certainly, a general news value of *drama* and *representation of what is negative* (Galtung and Ruge 1965) plays a role here as 'good' news, i.e. those about positive, peaceful events are generally not among the values identified as newsworthy.

²⁰ An important caveat has to be introduced here as this is my own interpretation of what was said in the interview on this particular topic.

Placement of items

None of the newspapers have sections devoted to the region, be it the region of former Yugoslavia, Western Balkans or wider region of South East Europe. The items on Serbia and Croatia in the quality newspapers are mainly located in the sections with main news / news of the day and in the sections devoted to international news. Some are scattered in other sections, mainly culture and arts in *Vjesnik*, but also others.

The tabloids follow a similar pattern, with some articles scattered around different sections other than international pages and main news. *24 Sata* is an exception, with the majority of items on Serbia located in the main news section considering that this is an unusually large section and that there are no pages designated to international affairs in this daily.

The key finding here is the fact that none of the newspapers have a designated section for the region, and that by placing a significant number of the items on the neighbors on the international pages, an implicit message being sent out to the readers is that the neighbors have no closer links to the country than any other country in the EU or internationally. Serbia and Croatia are to each other nowadays an international affair- at least that is the message that a reader could get by daily perusal of the press. They may have been former Yugoslav republics united by brotherhood and unity, scarred by the same war, but now there is a distance and almost a business-like relationship as far as the placement of news tells us. We are abroad to each other, a foreign country so to speak.

Are neighbors front page news?

Only 7 items out of the total number of 64 items covering Serbia or Croatia in all four newspapers have announcements on front pages, that is a headline only, or headline with sub-

headline, with or without a photograph in the cases of *Press*, *24 Sata* and *Vjesnik*, while *Politika* also carries beginnings of articles which are then continued inside the newspaper. Interestingly, all of the items announced on the front pages cover the topics of war crimes and dealing with the past. Most of them are located on a single day, November 19, 2008, when the stories were published about the case of Croatia pressing charges against Serbia before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and about commemorations of atrocities committed during the war in Croatia. *Vjesnik* occupies 2/3 of the front page with the announcement of the story about the process before ICJ (headline: *Serbia will be Tried for Genocide in Croatia !*) and the one of the story about the commemoration of the atrocities in Vukovar (headline: *Homage to the Hero Town*), both placed centrally and accompanied by large photographs²¹. *Politika*'s announcement of the ICJ story is the first from the top of the front page (headline: *Serbia will Sue Croatia*), with a portion of the article and a medium-sized neutral photo of the foreign minister. *Press* occupies approximately half of the front page with the very prominent, centrally located announcement of the ICJ story bearing a highly sensationalist headline: *Serbia is Raped!* and a neutral picture of the courtroom. *24 Sata* does not feature any of the stories on the front page, although they are covered inside the newspaper.

These announcements can be understood as an indication of the importance the issues of war crimes have for the newspapers. First of all, their strong political importance is doubtless, which determines their newsworthiness. Second, it is noteworthy that neither of the Serbian newspapers placed the front page announcement for the story about the commemoration of Vukovar, where the atrocities were committed by the Serb forces. Finally, these stories are highly newsworthy from the perspective of the universal news values as per Galton and Ruge (1965), Graber (1989) and Westerstahl and Johansson (1994). The story about the ICJ process is a *large-scale* event, high in political importance, while both events

²¹ A more detailed analysis of these elements of the items is presented in the section with discourse analysis.

are characterized by the values of *proximity*, implied *conflict* and *drama* (which the tabloid *Press* successfully spin into sensationalism), and both are essentially *negative* events.

Authorship – The Waning Role of Correspondents

Two thirds of the items on Croatia in *Politika* (10 out of 15 items total) are authored by journalists, mainly by the correspondent in Zagreb. The rest are agency news or items with no byline. Approximately a half of the items on Serbia in *Vjesnik* are contributions by journalists (11 out of 20 items total), again mainly correspondents. *Vjesnik* seems to use agencies somewhat more than *Politika*. Although an overwhelming number of items in *24 Sata* are allegedly authored by journalists (10 out of 13 total), according to the editor-in-chief's claims in the interview for this research, they are signed most often with initials and rarely with a full by-line. The absence of news agencies as sources or edited news agency items indicates a possibility that some of the items signed as authored by journalists are in fact based on agency news or on-line sources, which is a practice of the Serbian tabloid *Press* (Odavić 2009). This assumption by the researcher is strengthened by the fact that *24 Sata* does not have a network of correspondents, or a correspondent in Serbia (Ivanuš 2009).

Half of the items in *Press* are authored by journalists, while the rest come from agencies and other sources. However, *Press* does not have a network of correspondents, or one in Serbia. Development of such a network has never been a plan. The reasons are only partially financial (Odavić 2009), while the main reason is that the coverage based on agency news and citing of various on-line sources (for example, the most popular Croatian news portal Index.hr) seems to be sufficient for the goals of the newsroom regarding the coverage of Serbia and other neighbors. Occasionally, for the coverage of bigger events, a journalist from the region is hired temporarily (Odavić 2009). The situation is very similar in *24 Sata* in

this regard, as the newspaper does not have or plan to have correspondents. Both tabloids satisfy their needs regarding the coverage of the region using agency sources and the on-line ones, considering that they focus on short journalistic forms, key information only, without analysis or in-depth reporting. Also, the tabloids do not take into consideration the potential needs of particular parts of the audience in Serbia that may have links with Croatia and the rest of the region or any other particular interest in it, possibly because both tabloids' strategy is to cast as wide a possible net on the entire audience, satisfying their needs (as the editors perceive them) in terms of the lowest common denominator, which has so far proven successful in terms of circulation. The only particular segment of the audience that they try to capture are young people (Ivanuš 2009), and these have by and large not lived in former Yugoslavia to have a pronounced interest in the neighboring countries.

There is a clear difference between the tabloids and the quality newspapers in terms of the role of correspondents. While the tabloids choose to operate without them, they are hired by *Politika* and *Vjesnik*. The former, as a quality newspaper with a long tradition and reputation built on quality international news reporting, has nevertheless reduced its network of permanent correspondents²² due to financial reasons, to one in the USA and 4 in the region – in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia. In the times of former Yugoslavia, *Politika* used to have a correspondent in every major Croatian town due to the common Yugoslav market and the fact that the newspaper was sold in Croatia. Interestingly, despite the cuts in the network of *Politika's* correspondents, it is the ones in the region that are still on the newspaper's payroll. One of the reasons is *Politika's* tradition of strong regional and foreign news reporting, which it tries to maintain as a quality newspaper. Also, being under the state influence, its interest is in in-depth coverage of the inter-state

²² Permanent correspondents are those hired and paid by *Politika*. There is, however, a correspondent in Brussels paid by the WAZ company, a partial owner of *Politika*, who caters to several WAZ editions, including *Politika*. Additionally, contributions from the world and the region are acquired by free-lancers, usually journalists who are stationed abroad for family or other reasons, and are paid per contribution, while working for multiple news organizations.

affairs of Serbia and the countries of the region. Additionally, *Politika* takes into consideration the needs of a part of its audience in Serbia that has personal and professional links in the region of former Yugoslavia (Samardžija 2009). Its audience is generally older, has lived in former Yugoslavia and thus has stronger links and interest the region than younger audiences. It also includes professionals with business interests in the region (Samardžija 2009).

Due to financial reasons, *Vjesnik* has kept correspondents on its payroll in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina only. The reasons are three-fold. First, the costs of living in these countries are far lower than keeping a correspondent in a Western European country (Šabić 2009). Second, there is the reason of *proximity* as a news value. Namely, when the network of correspondents had to be cut, Macedonia suffered first as it is “geographically further and readers tend to know less about it [than about Serbia or BiH]” (Šabić 2009). Finally, *Vjesnik* recognized that the role of correspondents can increasingly be supplemented or replaced by agency news and a multitude of on-line sources the content of which is cited and rewritten in-house (Šabić 2009). The correspondents in Moscow and London work for other media and are paid per contribution, while a *Vjesnik* journalist travels to Brussels on as-needed basis, which saves costs (Šabić 2009).

Distribution of Items by the Topic

The topics of war crimes and dealing with the past, as well as the coverage of domestic and international politics, leads in the overall count of items on Serbia in Croatian press and vice versa, with no major differences between tabloids and quality newspapers or differences between the countries. The exception is the apolitical Croatian tabloid *24 Sata* with virtually no items covering politics of Serbia, save for the war crimes topics. The editor-

in-chief of *24 Sata* explains this by the perceived interests of the audience, considering that the war is still fresh in their minds (Ivanuš 2009).

Almost a half of the articles on Serbia in *Vjesnik* cover the topic of war crimes and dealing with the past (10 out of 22). 6 deal with Serbia's domestic and international politics, while 4 cover culture and arts and only 1 deals with crime and accidents. The established distribution of articles according to the topic is in line with this quality newspaper's editorial proposition which focuses on political events and processes. The mission of the newspaper is to be a serious quality newspaper which avoids tabloidization (Šabić 2009). Thus the low occurrence of items in the topics dealing with crime and accidents. *Vjesnik's* persistent tradition of the extensive coverage of culture and arts is reflected in the highest number of items dealing with Serbia in the realm of culture of arts compared to the other three analyzed newspapers.

There is a clear parallel when it comes to the distribution of articles according to the topic in the two quality newspapers. Similarly to *Vjesnik*, almost a half of the items on Croatia in *Politika* deal with the topic of war crimes, while the other half focus on the politics – domestic and international. Only one item covers culture and art, which is explained by the work routine of the correspondents, including the one in Croatia, who have a habit of following high-level politics through well-established channels of information, while they hardly ever venture into other realms (Samardžija 2009). At the same time, there is no demand by the newsroom for the correspondents to step out of the procedural political coverage (Samardžija 2009). Additionally, work on a complex, analytical topic outside of a beaten track would require a correspondent not to file contributions for a couple of days, which is not a preferred option by the newsroom (Šabić 2009).

The tabloids show somewhat more scattered distribution of items according to the topic. Yet, the trend of covering topics of war crimes and dealing with the past is visible also

in *24 Sata* with close to the half of items (5 out of 13 items). In line with the declared “apolitical” (Ivanuš 2009) orientation of the tabloid, none of the items on Serbia are located in the topics dealing with domestic or international politics of the country. The rest of the items on Serbia are scattered among the topics such as crime and accidents, extraordinary events, show-business and others. Despite the lack of interest in politics, war crimes topics are present in the paper, yet either as very brief news items (for instance, about a renewed demand by the Hague Tribunal for a war criminal to be captured) or short, photo-intensive, emotionally packed reportage pieces from commemorations of atrocities. Thus *24 Sata* seems to successfully spin the topic of war crimes to its tabloid needs. According to the opinion of the editor-in-chief of *24 Sata*, the “emotional coloring” of the reporting when it comes to the topics of war crimes and dealing with the past cannot be avoided (Ivanuš 2009). Although *24 Sata* is led in its editorial policy primarily by the assumptions of readers’ needs and wishes and their feedback (Ivanuš 2009), Ivanuš did not wish to confirm that in this case the tabloid adjusts the tone of the reporting to the perceived mood of the readership. Rather, he left the explanation open, pointing out that “the marks of the war are still fresh, particularly with the people who suffered losses”. He added that *24 Sata* does not discourage the re-establishment of trust and reconciliation between Serbian and Croatian peoples, but that his media organization is not of the opinion that media should have such a role.

The Serbian tabloid *Press* dedicates less than a third of items (4 out of 14 items) to the topics of war crimes and dealing with the past, while the same number deal with the domestic and international politics of Croatia. The rest of the items cover crime and accidents, sports (although not on the dedicated sports pages), show-business and culture. What stands out in the *Press*’ coverage of war crimes issues are sensationalist headlines, such as ‘*Serbia is Raped!*’ (on the occasion of the Croatia pressing charges against Serbia before ICJ). The reasons are two-fold and interconnected: one is in the sensationalism usually associated with

tabloids, while the underlying issue seems to be the personal perception of the editor-in-chief regarding what sells the newspaper. Namely, it is the editor-in-chief that decides on the headlines and look of the front pages, where the big stories about war crimes issues are usually announced (Odavić 2009). According to Odavić (2009), the emotional charging of coverage is most easily visible precisely in the topics dealing with war crimes due to the sensitive, emotional nature of such topics often triggering strong reactions by the public and the political establishment. Odavić (2009) assumes that the tone of such coverage is adjusted to the perceived mentality of the readership, that is – the editors assume what the audience wishes to read about war crimes issues. However, Odavić (2009) points to an important element of the tabloid newsroom culture regarding the coverage of war crimes issues and dealing with the past: there is no systematic coverage with adequate follow-up. Rather, *Press* reports on the sentences issued by the ICTY or local courts in the region and only then are they commented on, usually in a critical manner, “without having spent a single line previously to explain why and how the sentence came to be” (Odavić 2009). This type of fault he finds common in other print media, as well.

The topic of war crimes seems to be high on the agenda of both the tabloids and quality newspapers. While the tabloids approach these topics from the point of view of the perceived interest of their audiences, and spin the coverage towards sensationalism, the quality newspapers treat them as high-level political issues, high on the news agenda as inter-country political affairs. It is the big events that get more prominent coverage, such as Croatia pressing charges against Serbia for genocide before ICJ, as well as commemorations of atrocities, while the reports on war crimes trials are usually covered only when they begin or end, with no regular follow-up as they unfold, and with little explanation as to the background of the events. The chapter on discourse analysis treats the war crimes topic in the four newspapers in detail.

Size and genre of items

Short forms dominate all the newspapers when it comes to the coverage of ‘the neighbor’. Dominant size and genre of items both in tabloids and quality newspapers are news items and short news items (up to 10 lines) and short articles (from 10 lines up to ½ a page). The exceptions are *24 Sata* with the majority of items in the short news item category and no short articles, while *Vjesnik* also features articles (1/2 to 1/1 page). There is a notable absence of reportage, interviews and analysis in all the newspapers, with the exception of *Politika* which features an interview and some analysis. Large-scale political events, such as Croatia pressing charges against Serbia for genocide before ICJ, are covered extensively, as long articles in the quality press.

Being tabloids, neither *Press* or *24 Sata* have an ambition for analytical journalism or genres beyond news and simple articles (and an occasional interview in *Press*). The reasons for the dominance of short forms differ between the tabloids and quality press. *24 Sata* accounts for its success with young audiences by short forms, simple, straightforward style, and a strong visual component (photographs). They have in mind that the young are used to the Internet where the attention span is short and browsing nervous and superficial, and thus they try to attract their attention by making reading a very easy task (Ivanuš 2009). Unlike *24 Sata*, *Press* indeed features somewhat longer forms, including longer articles (1/2 to 1/1 page). The reason is mainly in the given layout of pages, designed after the results of eye-tracking studies, according to which there is usually one longer item per page or stretched over two pages with a large photo, accompanied by short news items on the sides of pages (Odavić 2009). Thus the formatting dictates the length of items.

By the nature of being quality newspapers, these have a tradition of forms longer than news items. Short articles are mainly supplied by the correspondents, while short news items and news items are generally acquired from the agencies (Samardžija 2009). The lack of a variety in genres when it comes to covering Serbia and Croatia is to be found in the already mentioned “path of least resistance” of the correspondents (Samardžija 2009; Šabić 2009).

Overall, the dominance of short forms indicates that ‘the neighbors’, although still high on each other’s agenda, are still not interested in in-depth, extensive coverage of one another on daily basis. It is mainly the large-scale political events that ‘deserve’ longer forms.

Protagonists – Who Represents the Neighbor?

Main actors of items covering Serbia and Croatia contribute to the overall representation of the neighbor in the eyes of the readers. Also, the choice of the actors is linked with the topics covered and style of reporting. Dominant protagonists of items in the quality newspapers are the state or state bodies and politicians (12 out of 15 in *Politika*; 13 out of 21 in *Vjesnik*). The reasons lie in the dominance of political and war crimes topics, combined with the reporting style which seldom takes into consideration opinions of common citizens, but rather focuses only on the sources in the high-level politics. The effect is amplified by the already mentioned indolence of the correspondents in Serbia and Croatia who prefer to follow the usual path of high-level politics and associated sources. The readers of *Vjesnik* can also have a glimpse of Serbia through the personalities of film and theater authors and cultural institutions (6 out of 21 items) due to a robust coverage of culture and arts in this newspaper in general.

In line with its nature of a tabloid which ventures into political topics and somewhat longer journalistic forms, a half of the items on Croatia in *Press* (7 out of 14) have the state,

state bodies or politicians as the main protagonists. Other public figures are the next dominant protagonist in *Press*, these being show-business personalities, artists, as well as war crimes indictees who were formerly politicians or otherwise known to the public. The finding is again in line with the tabloid nature of *Press* and associated distribution of items by topic. *24 Sata* is true to its apolitical tabloid nature with only 1 item (out of 12) representing Serbia through the state and state bodies, and 3 through politicians. The dominant protagonists are other public figures (show-business, sports, war-crimes indictees) and individuals, the latter most often being protagonists of crime and accidents – either as victims or as perpetrators.

Common to all the newspapers is a notable absence of representation of the neighbor through individual citizens as protagonists except in crime and accidents topics, or through institutions or organizations and associated individuals other than that of the state (e.g. civil sector). The explanation, as the interviewed editors agreed, lies in the dominantly procedural style of political reporting, while politics is the dominant topic. Stories that directly concern daily lives of citizens, containing issues and problems that directly reflect on their daily well-being, are largely absent. One reason is that markets where the newspapers are sold hardly cross the boundaries of one's own country and thus the perception of the editors is that the stories about daily issues affecting lives of individuals in the other country are not of interest to the domestic audience (Samardžija 2009). As the editor from *Politika* put it: “Even if we were to write about a Croatian peasant, he will never be able to read that” (Samardžija 2009). The second is the habit of the correspondents of quality newspapers to file stories focusing on high-level politics as they best operate with the sources and procedures in that topical area. The tabloids, on the other hand, feature individuals mainly through crime stories, which is their “core business”, to quote the editor-in-chief of *24 Sata*.

General Tone of Items covering The Neighbor

After almost two decades since the beginning of the war and the accompanying media propaganda which ignited hatred, it seems that the tone of reporting about the neighbor in the press is mainly neutral, i.e. informative nowadays. By tone we mean the overall approach to the representation of the neighbor in an item, as composed by the newsroom staff. Even if individual sources in the item speak critically of the neighbor, the item could still be neutral if the intervention by the journalist, for instance in introducing opposing opinions, lead to a well-balanced piece which gives an overall impression of neutrality to the reader. It was from the point of view of a reader that this variable was approached, i.e. I looked at what kind of impression of the neighbor an item might deliver upon a reader.

However, there is still some presence of negative, i.e. critical tone, while there is also some affirmative reporting to be found. Both in the quality papers and in the tabloids the negative tone is mainly located in the topics dealing with the war crimes, while the rare affirmative ones are to be found in the sphere of culture and arts and show-business.

Politika generally reports neutrally about Croatia (12 out of 15 items are neutral/informative in tone). *Vjesnik* is mainly neutral (16 out of 22 items), with some instances of negative/critical tone (4 out of 22) and a small number of affirmative one (2 out of 22). *24 Sata* is mainly neutral, with some negative/critical items (3 out of 13), while *Press* has an equal number of neutral and negative/critical items, some occurrence of affirmative ones (2 out of 13) and one item with a discriminatory tone (a commentary by an editor on the occasion of the charges pressed against Serbia for genocide by Croatia before ICJ). A detailed insight into the items of tone other than neutral one is presented in the section which provides discourse analysis of these items. It suffices to conclude now that the issues of war crimes seem to be the largest area of contention between the two countries considering that they are main 'carriers' of the negative tone regarding the 'neighbor', while rare items about

cultural exchange in theater and film seem to be a seed of the affirmative representation of the neighbors.

Discourse Analysis

Expected Findings

In the effort to identify the discursive strategies present in the analyzed newspapers, and to what extent they have moved away or still reflect those of the media in the times of war and its aftermath, my expectations were guided by the earlier reviewed literature from the years after 2000, which claims that hate speech has subsided to be replaced by more sophisticated forms of the discourse of animosity. Therefore, I did not expect to find instances of overt hate-speech, hot nationalism or stereotyping. However, it was difficult to assume what discursive forms to expect exactly as there is not much literature analyzing present-day discourses in Serbian and Croatian press. I did expect to find hot nationalism replaced by its more banal, mundane forms, in line with Billig's (1995) theory of *banal nationalism*²³, the concept that denotes mechanisms by which nations are reproduced on daily basis in a seemingly harmless, mundane way. Additionally, an expectation was that the issues of war crimes and dealing with the past would be marked by *silence* (Đerić 2008), that is an absence of mention of 'our' wrong deeds, while the wrongdoings of 'the other' would be stressed. Related to that, it was to be assumed that some traces of victimization of one's own nation would be identified as well.

²³ Unlike the 'hot', overt nationalism, banal nationalism goes unnoticed, but has an almost subliminal effect in strengthening and perpetuating the sense of belonging to a nation. However, far from being harmless, the omnipresence and repetitiveness of banal nationalism delineates 'us' from 'the others', 'our country' (which is, according to Billig's analysis of deixis most often just 'the country'), creating a nationalistic potential. It is this power which lies precisely in its seeming banality and repetitiveness. The examples of banal nationalism which Billig (1995) analyses in Western countries, mainly in the UK and the U.S, range from flags flown in front of institutional buildings, national symbols on banknotes and coins, to language in the media and politics employing stereotypes and deixis (such as 'we', 'the country', 'the nation') that place the speakers and their audiences in an '*imagined political community*' (Anderson 1991), which is thus implicitly grouping itself into a body of nation via 'deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991)

The Power of Imagined Communities

In examining the power of such elements of discourse, it is important to view their potential impact on the readers in the context of Anderson's (1991) theory of *imagined communities*. He traces the origins of the phenomenon to the advent of print media and its commercialization. To summarize Anderson (1991), reading a newspaper, as a form of a daily ritual, we are a part of an invisible community of people who are doing the same, more or less simultaneously, although they are likely physically distant from us. The media convey a certain meaning, which we consume, and 'share' with the community we can not see, but feel the simultaneous presence of. This builds a sense of unity, a sense of belonging to the same community, or a nation. This mechanism is a seemingly innocent, yet in the course of time it is a powerful means of reinforcing national feelings of unity and commonness. The power of discourses charged with animosity towards 'the other' can thus be understood better if we see an average reader as belonging to the community, albeit 'imagined' of the Serbian or Croatian nation.

In order to establish the strategies that dominate the negative representation of 'the neighbor' in the analyzed newspapers, discourse analysis was employed, focusing on both the text and the accompanying elements – photographs, headlines, sub-headlines etc. The items in the Croatian and Serbian press which are negative / critical²⁴ towards 'the neighbor' are mainly located in the issues of the 19th November 2008, when three events occurred related to the war crimes committed in the war in Croatia (1991 – 1995). One event was the decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to declare its jurisdiction to hear Croatia's Genocide claims against Serbia. Consequently, during the process that may last for years, the ICJ will question the liability of Serbia for the breach of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The other event was the commemoration day of the

²⁴ For the explanation of the coding category 'critical/negative tone', please see the section with the results and the interpretation of the content analysis.

atrocities committed in the Croatian town in Vukovar in 1991 by the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) and the Serb paramilitary units²⁵. The third one was a commemoration of the atrocities in the Croatian village of Škabrnja, one of the first mass war crimes in Croatia committed against civilians. It is the large-scale events such as the decision of ICJ, and the commemorations that trigger highly emotional reporting, while the continuous reporting on the attempts to arrest the war criminals on the loose, or the reporting from the courtrooms of ICTY, is rather neutral in tone.

Vjesnik - Blood, Pilgrim, Victim

Vjesnik features ICJ decision and commemoration in Vukovar on the front page, with large photographs. The article about the ICJ decision is announced with a neutral photograph of the ICJ courtroom and an emotional headline: *Serbia Will Be Tried For Genocide In Croatia!* Although this quality newspaper sees it as its mission to remain serious and avoid sensationalism of any kind (Šabić 2009), this headline steps out of the neutral discourse into an emotional one due to the exclamation mark at the end, unusual for quality newspapers. It is possible to interpret it as a marker of sentiments reflecting joy with the prospects of justice being served, while a more conservative interpretation would certainly see it at least as a marker of the unusually high importance of the event, thus showing how the issues of war crimes and dealing with the past are high on the agenda of the newspapers. Along with the neutrally presented information on the ICJ decision, the article brings statements by the Croatian president and the prime minister. It is the statements that are the carriers of the critical attitude towards Serbia. The president stresses the fact that the ICJ decision coincides with the commemoration of the atrocities in Vukovar is “symbolic and a justice of sorts”. The prime minister emphasizes that Croatia is still in pain over those who went missing in the war,

²⁵ Vukovar was shelled under siege during 90 days. The town was completely leveled and suffered major civilian casualties.

and that Serbia “must face the past”, adding that “The war was not conducted on the Serbian soil”, and that it was Croatian and not Serbian towns that suffered destruction. He symbolically concludes that “it was not Croatian soldiers that went to Serbia, but vice versa, while flowers were thrown at them”. He also stressed “the great evil” that Milošević’s politics of Greater Serbia brought to the Croatian people, but also to others. The president of the parliament invokes justice for all the victims by the need to punish the culprits.

The theme of the justice that has to be served recurs through the statements, while the framing of the article is that of victimized Croatia. The statements by the politicians skillfully avoid any reference to the Croatian involvement in the war and the overall impression is that of a black and white narrative, where the attacked Croatia was always and only a victim. The attribution of the “the great evil” to Milošević’s politics sends the blame on the regime of the time; that is in the only proper direction, thus avoiding frequent mistakes of the war-time discourse when the blame would be put collectively on a people. The article does not cite any Serbian politicians or other sources from Serbia, but it is entirely focused on the official Croatian perspective on the issue. The journalistic rule of the two sides, particularly important to texts the subject of which is a conflict, as every conflict inevitably involves at least two parties (Gredelj 1997, 220) is suspended here. It is, however, not easy to label this item as representing ‘the neighbor’ critically, considering that the negative tones are contained in the quotes by the politicians. One could argue that it is a professional journalistic behavior to report on the event as it happened, and so the quotes were carried as they were uttered. However, there are opinions that editors and journalists should be pro-active in such instances and critically reflect on the potentially harmful declarations, even more so when they originate from high-ranking officials (Vilović 2005, 259). The emotional headline and statements, combined with the absence of the voice of ‘the other side’ and the focus on the Croatian perspective only amplify the already strong message of the politicians’ speeches.

Yet, as the blame is attributed to the regime and the state, as the entity to be tried before ICJ, the narrative strikes the reader as moderate in the negative representation of ‘the neighbor’.

The second article featured on the front page of the same issue of *Vjesnik* covers the commemoration of the atrocities in Vukovar in 1991. Accompanied by the photo of a procession of Croatian soldiers in winter uniforms at the event, bearing the Croatian flag, the front page announcement bears the headline *Homage to the Heroic Town*, while the headline with the article is *Homage to the Heroic Town paid by 20.000 Pilgrims*. The sub-heading features a line from a speech delivered at the event: “*To you, the great, the honorable past, to you, the victim of blood, eternal glory*”. Both the headline and the sub-heading already introduce the key metaphors of the narrative: Vukovar as the victim, personified as the epitome of the national past, and the saint-like status ascribed to the town through the representation of the commemoration event as a mass pilgrimage. The town is elevated through personification to the mythical hero-victim status of the nation. It becomes a building block of the new national myth-making. Smith (2003) defines as one of “sacred foundations” important for self-definition of new nations “a belief in the regenerative power of mass and individual sacrifice to ensure a glorious destiny, and the importance of commemorating and celebrating the community and its heroes”. (Smith 2003, 255). The central photo with the article features a long procession of citizens, led by people in national costumes and soldiers in ceremonial uniforms bearing a multitude of Croatian flags. The multiplication of the symbols of banal nationalism (Billig 1995) reinforces the overall sentiment of national unity through plight. The caption stresses the five kilometer long walk of the procession. The text mentions “the victim of Vukovar” on three occasions, repeatedly stresses the size of the line of “pilgrims” and “the Croatian unity” it demonstrates (the latter being the words of the prime minister). It also mentions the title of the event “Vukovar is Our Beautiful Country, Vukovar

is My Croatia”. Thus the town and its plight become the embodiment of the country and the nation, its body even, and certainly the axis of its unity.

The mention of the perpetrators is absent throughout the article until the very end, where words of a politician are paraphrased regarding the “the victim town” and its “heroic role” in “breaking of the spine of the criminal Yugoslav Army and Serbian paramilitaries”. This message of anger and satisfaction with the revenge, reminiscent of the war time reports from the battlefields, is again directed at the military, and not at the Serbian nation. This is also the only look outwards in the article, out of the Croatian nation and Vukovar’s role in defending it and unifying it.

The theme of victimization is juxtaposed with the politicians’ statements about the economic development of Vukovar and its way forward. Vukovar is again repeatedly personified, as it is “ready to create its own future”. The emotional narrative of the economic development implies regeneration and rejuvenation. Past the blood sacrifice, the town personifying the plight of the nation and its unity rises from the ashes and regenerates. The myth of “rebirth and renewal” (Schopflin 1997, 32-33) enters the discourse in a pattern which allows the horrors of the past to be left behind and replaced by clean, new beginning (Schopflin 1997, 32-33). This myth is closely related to the foundational myth (Schopflin 1997, 33), which is to be found as a deeper structure here, as a tool of a group to deal with its self-definition and self-determination, in this case a Croatian nation. The implicit meaning is that “the newly founded system has dispensed with whatever made the old reprehensible” (Schopflin 1997, 33). In the religious overtones and invocation of myths, it becomes evident that ceremonial commemorations, being ritual in nature, are particularly important for the construction of social memory (Rothenbuhler 1998, 12). Namely, they are a factor of homogenization of a community due to their two-fold function – they bond the group together in present time, while at same time linking it with the temporally distant generations of the

past (Đerić 2008, 85). In addition to this, they reduce indecision of the group, generate consensus, and motivate to action (Rothenbuhler 1998, 11). It seems that the process of defining the nation, which involves strategies like myth-making and selective memory (Smith 2003, 2) is still ongoing and that the memories and symbols from the past war are the tissue of new myth-making, forming the new heritage of the nation in the process of its identity-building.

The article in the same issue of *Vjesnik* covering the commemoration of the atrocities in the Croatian village of Škabrnja provides a neutral journalistic background of the war crime. It explains how “the units of the Yugoslav Army” and “the numerous Serbian paramilitaries” entered the village and what atrocities were committed. Again, the blame is directed at the military and the paramilitaries, with no attribution of a collective guilt. However, the emotional charging is again mainly located in the statements by the politicians: “We do not hate, but we remember”, “We remember the pain and the atrocities committed, the perpetrators who are yet to be reached by the hand of justice. We were aware then as we are today that no one can ever subdue Croatia”. The article is marked by the motif of remembrance and the will for justice to be served, framed as the connective tissue of the Croatian unity. The collective pronoun ‘we’ implies that the remembrance should be collective, shared by the whole Croatian nation. The public memory of the evil committed by ‘the other’ is thus reinforced. The statements stress that the plight of Škabrnja “should be seen as the plight of the entire Croatian people”, and the conviction that the perpetrators will be punished is repeated. Juxtaposed with the painful past is the future of hope and progress, as Škabrnja “has turned towards development”. The successes of the development are enumerated in the statements by politicians. Similarly to the article about Vukovar, the national spirit here is again boosted by the message of the Phoenix-like renewal, a myth of regeneration as a constitutive one within the myth of foundation. A box within the text,

entitled “Serious Warning” features a reaction by a Croatian politician to the Serbian president’s and foreign minister’s statements which “labeled [operation] ‘Storm’ as a crime and asked an apology from Croatia”. The Croatian politician comments: “This is a serious warning that those people do not understand anything, or nothing is sacred to them. It is most likely the case of both”. Implied here is a denial that any bad deeds were committed by the Croats in the military action ‘Storm’, while the discord with the Serbian politicians is strengthened by the phrase ‘those people’, implying distance, ‘foreignness’ and the status of ‘the others’ whose names are, moreover, not worth mentioning again. The overall message is that of Croatia as the victim. The contestation over the operation ‘Storm’ introduces the motif of ‘the sacred’ (“nothing is sacred to them”), which is a *de facto* introduction of a taboo in the national rhetoric. As Đerić (2008, 85) points out in her study of the Serbian and Croatian press coverage of the operation, the ‘Storm’ is “the symbol of new beginning (a rebirth of the nation) for the contemporary political mythology of Croatia”, while it is “a contribution to the saga of victimization” for the Serb political mythology. Succinctly put, “remembrance of the ‘Storm’ in Croatia is a *celebration*, while in Serbia it is a *commemoration*” (Đerić 2008, 85) [italics in the original]. This schism in the perception of the operation “Storm” will be additionally evident in the analysis of the Serbian press below.

24 Sata – Voice to the People

The tabloid *24 Sata* reports on the same event with the headline “*Serbia to be Tried in the Hague for Genocide!*” The exclamation mark is not an unusual discursive device of sensationalism in the tabloid, and is to be expected in relation to this issue of high political importance. The piece is visually merged with the one about the commemorations in Vukovar and Škabrnja, the headline of which is “*Tell Us Where Our Dead Are*”. The visual merging is achieved by the photographs from Vukovar and Škabrnja commemorations being placed around both articles. Thus the two articles are *de facto* connected into one despite the two

headlines, implying the close link of the ICJ process with the events in Vukovar and Škabrnja. The articles occupy three and a half pages, where a lot of the space is taken by the photographs of grieving women in black, wreaths of flowers and the president and prime minister in solemn mood at the event in Vukovar. The selection of politicians' quotes is similar to those in *Vjesnik*, yet these are shorter and thus their force is somewhat lessened. The message about the required justice for the culprits and the need for Serbia to face the past as it brought great harm to Croatia is delivered, yet the article is framed differently than in *Vjesnik*. Statements by Croatian politicians are juxtaposed with those by the Serbian legal representative in the Hague and the Serbian Minister of Justice. Thus the journalistic rule of the representation of both sides is respected. The framing is that of a contestation of equals, the contest that is to be waged in the courtroom. The Croatian Minister of Justice says: "We won the first round. Now we are faced with the second, which is the proof of genocide in Croatia". The discourse is reminiscent of sports competitions. Combined with the presence in the article of both sides involved in the issue, the overall tone does not evoke mythical messages of national unity through plight or victimization. Rather, the emphasis seems to be on the present dealings with the issues of the past which continue to hurt Croatia and are still hard to forget. Unlike *24 Sata*, *Vjesnik* does not cite any representatives of Serbia, and gives more weight to the emotional statements by the politicians.

The item on the commemorations in Vukovar and Škabrnja contains only some 10 lines of text, dominated by a large photograph of the procession in Vukovar, led by men in military uniforms, carrying flags, as well as a photos of women in black remembering their dearest who fell as victims of the atrocities. "Condensed symbols", such as flags and uniforms, are particularly strong in ritual situations as they "expand to fill their situations with meaning" (Rothenbuhler 1998, 17). The large headline "*Tell Us Where the Dead Are*" is followed by a sub-heading "*Vukovar and Škabrnja Await Punishment for the Culprits*". The

short text, of a usual size for this tabloid, features relatives of the victims as the protagonists. Their pain and plea to find out where the victims are buried “is directed towards Serbia”. The strong emotional appeal of this plea can be explained by Verdery’s (1999) argument: “In post-Yugoslavia, dead bodies have been a principal means of blaming and demanding accountability. It was the discovery of mass burials in caves that began Croat-Serb contests over who was to blame for which set of massacres.” The author of the article labels perpetrators as ‘Chetniks’²⁶, this being a stereotypical derogatory name for Serb forces, a linguistic carrier of hatred towards ‘the enemy’, common during the war of the 1990s, both among the people and in the media (for examples, see Đerić 2008: 79). The term carries particular weight for Croatian audience as it is suggestive of grave murders and ethnic cleansing²⁷, and is a remnant of the war-time hate-speech.

The notable difference between *24 Sata* and *Vjesnik* in the coverage of commemorations is in the tabloid’s focus on the people, the actual relatives of victims as protagonists, which is in line with the tabloid news values of placing people rather than ideas and processes in the focus of narratives, while *Vjesnik* presents the event through the statements of politicians delivered on the occasion. While the plea of the relatives of the victims is the key ‘carrier’ of the emotional weight of the article in the tabloid, it is the statements of the politicians that set the tone of the item in *Vjesnik*. In line with its policies of a serious quality newspaper, *Vjesnik* does not use hate speech, and presents the actual background of the war crimes factually and neutrally, while *24 Sata* slips into the transgression of hate-speech as a remnant of the war-time discourse.

²⁶ Chetniks were Serb paramilitary units during World War II who sided with the royalists, but were in fact operating as extreme Serbian nationalists, known for grave atrocities committed against Partisans, ethnic Croats and Bosnian Muslims. (Zakošek 2000, 115).

²⁷ Zakošek (2000: 115) stresses that “some Serb paramilitary units themselves used the term for self-identification. There was a tendency to expand the use of the term: while in the beginning of the conflict it referred strictly to certain paramilitaries, later on it was applied to any Serb military units (including soldiers of JNA)”.

Politika – Silence and Denial

The front page of the Belgrade daily *Politika* of November 19, 2008 is dominated by the headline “*Serbia will sue Croatia*”. The sub-heading paraphrases the words of the Serbian foreign minister: “This will be an opportunity to hear the truth about the crimes that Croatia committed against Serbs in 1995, but also in the World War II”. The statement resounds with ominous overtones of the invocation of history as means of “settling the accounts”, a frequent war-time discursive strategy. The article opens with the announcement that Serbia will sue Croatia to the ICJ for the atrocities committed in the operation “Storm” in 1995 as a measure related to the decision of ICJ to declare its jurisdiction in the process of Croatia’s claim against Serbia for genocide. Another politician is cited as saying that Serbia will try to “defend” itself by suing Croatia. What follows is the statement by the foreign minister saying that Croatia “did not adequately respond to the attempts of Serbia to make peace, leave the past behind and turn to the common European future”. The main bone of contention is clearly the operation “Storm”. In the words of the prime minister “*they* [my italics] refused to face the fact that 250.000²⁸ Serbs were ethnically cleansed from the territory of the Republic of Croatia. This time *they* [my italics] will have to do it in front of the ICJ”. The rest of the lengthy article is mainly focused on a neutral representation of the legal details of the processes.

The discourse of the politicians is that of a counter-attack as a form of defense. The motifs of struggle and contestation dominate it. Moreover, Serbia is to be understood as the initiator of the normalization of relations between the two countries, as if it has no blame in the war. The refusal of Croatia to recognize that atrocities were committed in the operation “Storm” is enough for Serbia to take Croatia to the court. Justice is sought, but only for the

²⁸ Although this figure differs from the ones that can be found in various other sources, the issue of widespread manipulation with the numbers regarding the atrocities is beyond the scope of this research and will not be discussed.

atrocities against the Serb population. In the lengthy article there is no mention of why Serbia is accused of genocide, what these deeds may be. Again, there is *silence* (Đerić 2008) about *our* deeds, while *they* have a blame they do not wish to admit. It is the *silence*, the absence of certain information that constitutes one of the key elements of discourse in these examples. Implied is the narrative, known from the war times, of ‘our’ victims and ‘their’ perpetrators. Taking to court incites a new cycle of strife. Someone has to admit first that they committed atrocities, but none of the sides wants to do it. The photos accompanying the article are neutral – one is the portrait of the minister of foreign affairs, while the other is the Serbian legal representative in the courtroom. The article is framed as an issue of high-level politics, with the analysis of legal intricacies of the case, in contrast with the item covering the same topic in *Vjesnik*, where the discourse of national victimization prevails.

Politika also covers the commemoration in Vukovar. In the article entitled “*From Gloating to Caution*” there is no background on the actual events and the atrocities committed in Vukovar. Instead, the phrase “the tragedy of Vukovar” is used once by the journalist, while the day commemorated is “the one in 1991 when Croatian soldiers laid down their arms”. Again, there is *silence* about our crimes. As if “the tragedy” has no perpetrators, let alone ‘ours’; as if it was an accident like a fire or flood. The same quotes by Croatian leaders are used as in *Vjesnik* and *24 Sata*. However, this open, objective carrying of statements critical of Serbia, uttered at the event, is somewhat marred by the use of irony as a vehicle of animosity on two occasions. First, the coincidence that the commemoration in Vukovar happened on the same day as the ICJ decision is explained by the journalist as “accidental or intentional coincidence” which “pleased President Mesić”. The first phrase suggests that it is, in fact, not accidental and that there is a plan behind the concurrence of the two events, which can only be detrimental to Serbia. The attempt at establishing a balance by a later statement by a prominent NGO figure in Croatia is not quite successful. He dismisses the concurrence

as accidental and a consequence of negligence, though still - ‘an idiocy’. Croats have made a mistake out of stupidity, one can read between the lines, not out of ill intention. The statement suits the tone of the article and the message remains negative regarding ‘the neighbor’. Second, the Croatian prime minister’s words about how it was Croatia that was attacked by Serbia and not vice versa are labeled by the journalist “a common phrase which is used to strengthen the thesis about “the Serbian aggression on Croatia” “. The inverted commas are crucial to the meaning here – the Serbian aggression is an alleged one, it seems to be seen as a construct devised against Serbia. The statement is merely a “thesis”, a thought put forward that requires evidence, one of many, but it is far from being an established truth. Thus, there is an open denial of ‘our’ crimes. The same NGO figure states that the reconciliation is contingent on “swallowing some apologies”, putting the two sides at equal footing, which suits *Politika*’s representation of the issue. It seems that the discourse avoids putting blame on Serbia at any cost. The photograph with the text is a neutral one of the Croatian president and prime minister in conversation. *Silence* and *denial* is the strategy of *Politika* regarding the actual war crimes committed by the Serbian side in Vukovar or anywhere in Croatia for that matter.

Press – Victimization, Denial and Hate Speech

The Serbian tabloid *Press* is merciless in its sensationalist representation of the ICJ decision. The headline on the front page of the newspaper says: “*Serbia is Raped!*”. The victimization of Serbia thus reached a discursive peak as it perversely invokes the memory of the actual war crimes – those of rape. The pre-heading says: “*Grave Injustice: We will be Tried in the Hague for “Genocide in Croatia!”*”. Clearly, the message is laden with denial and victimization: there was no genocide, we are to understand, or at least Serbia had nothing to do with it, and thus the feeling of injustice. Moreover, the injustice could not be harder – it is a rape, the ultimate degradation of a human being. Additionally, Serbia is to be understood

as a woman, a violated one in the implied archetypal message of the headline. Moreover, it is no more Serbia as a state, but “we”. The state is identified with the nation and “we” are to be enraged individually as its members. The locus of the perceived injustice is revealed in the text: *“Serbia will thus be tried as per the plea by Croatia which evicted all the Serbs from the West Slavonia and Krajina in the operations “Bljesak” and “ Storm” and killed thousands of innocent civilians!?!”* Again, there is a complete *silence* about ‘our’ crimes (Đerić 2008). In fact, they are openly denied. The spiral of hatred can continue as only ‘their’ crimes against us exist, while ‘ours’ are alleged, a construct. The division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ reigns, in the spirit of the war-time discourse. Although there is no overt hate-speech in this article, it strikes the reader as immersed in hatred.

The same issue of *Press* features a commentary by the deputy editor-in-chief, triggered by the ICJ decision. Discourse is dominated by a xenophobic tone of outrage towards “them”, who are in this case the world, those who put demands on Serbia. *“ ‘They’ say that we should not argue with Croatia, that we should not remind them of war crimes, because they are our neighbors! Neighbors who slaughtered us fifty years ago, evicted us thirteen years ago, and now they are suing us for genocide!”* Additionally, the Croats are *“trying to heal their historical complexes on us”*. The statement can be taken as an example of hate speech (see Parekh 2006). The discourse is reminiscent of the time of Milošević’s propaganda of the 1990s when Serbian media exhibited a paranoid-like perception of the world which was there only to put demands and victimize Serbia. The media found ‘the enemy’ in the nations and countries of the region, in the USA, NATO, the Vatican. Yet all these ‘enemies’ were perceived as parts of one whole, one big collective enemy (Sofos 1999, 172) – ‘they’. “We” are the people of the country identified with it. Not the citizens, but the body of the nation. Again, the piece resounds with the complete silence about ‘our’ crimes, but the reader is loudly reminded in a rampage of inflammatory speech not only of the blame

of ‘the neighbor’ in the war of the 1990s. Moreover, the author reaches back to the history to strengthen his point inciting the historical spiral of memory linked to the hatred between the two nations.

CONCLUSIONS

Serbia and Croatia: Neighbors in Contestation

The research on the representation of Croatia and Serbia in each other's print media, based on content analysis and interviews with the editors of the analyzed media, shows that there are no notable differences between the countries in the representation and factors that influence it. Rather, the differences are evident between quality press and the tabloids. Despite the perception of some of the interviewed editors that the press nowadays perceives Croatia and Serbia as foreign countries rather than neighbors (Ivanuš 2009; Samardžija 2009), the findings point to a continued interest of the print media for each other's country, superior to the interest for other neighbors.

The analyzed media are inward-looking, focused mainly on domestic news, which confirms the global trend of a decline in foreign news reporting and dominance of domestic issues (see Udovičić 2007; Car 2007; Valić Nedeljković and Baćanović 2007; Franks 2006; Wolter 2006; Bajomi-Lazar 2007; Malović 2004). There is no notable difference among the analyzed newspapers in the amount of coverage dedicated to 'the neighbor' (Croatia in Serbian press and Serbia in Croatian press). Roughly 4-5% of content is dedicated to the neighboring countries. Among the neighboring countries, Serbia is the most covered country in the two analyzed Croatian media, while Croatia is the most covered in the Serbian quality press and the second most covered in the tabloid. There is a stark coincidence in the numbers, as the coverage of Serbia and Croatia in each other's newspapers is around 2% in all the cases. Despite the low quantity of reporting on the region and foreign reporting relative to the reporting on domestic issues in Serbian and Croatian press, it seems that the two countries do not perceive each other as they do foreign countries outside the region as they are relatively high on each other's news agenda. Financial reasons, most often cited as factors behind the

trend of reduction in foreign reporting globally, seem to hardly influence the coverage of these two in each other's press. Moreover, although none of the newspapers have designated sections for the region, and feature the items on Serbia and Croatia either within main news / news of the day or within international pages, quality newspapers still keep permanent correspondents in Serbia and Croatia, despite the cuts in the networks of correspondents. This is a result of their traditional focus on high-level politics and foreign news, but also of the fact that they are influenced by the state ownership and continue to represent the viewpoints and issue of importance to the ruling political elite, among which the strong political links of the countries in the region are unavoidable. Due to their focus on short and simple reporting, an unpronounced interest in politics, and reliance on news agencies and online sources which satisfy their needs, the tabloids do not hire correspondents.

There is an approximately equal coverage of issues pertaining only to 'the neighbor' and those which emphasize the links and relations between the two countries. In the items focusing on the links between the two countries, there is a trend to represent them either as a locus of contestation or cooperation. By contestation I mean here an issue framed as conflict, animosity or tension of various degrees. Such representation is most present and powerful in the coverage of war crimes issues and dealing with the past. It is safe to conclude that this topic remains a sore spot in the relations between Serbia and Croatia as it shows continuous, intense animosities and is a locus of the remnants of the war time discourses of hatred. Findings of the discourse analysis are presented later in the conclusion.

The topics of war crimes and dealing with the past, as well as the coverage of domestic and international politics leads in the overall count of items on Serbia in Croatian press and vice versa. As for the topics dealing with war crimes, it is large-scale events, such as the charges pressed by Croatia against Serbia before the International Court of Justice, as well as ceremonial commemorations which are most represented, unlike the ongoing trials

before ICTY. As stated above, war crimes seem to be still a highly contentious issue between Serbia and Croatia triggering harsh, emotionally-packed statements by the politicians. The events are of undisputed high political value and are thus newsworthy. Additionally, they are newsworthy as they contain universal news values of *drama*, *conflict*, *negativity* and *proximity* (Galtung and Ruge 1965).

Dominant size and genre of items both in tabloids and quality newspapers are news items and short articles (from 10 lines up to ½ a page), with occasional longer articles in the quality press and a notable absence of reportage, interviews and analysis, which indicates that the editorial priorities in terms of in-depth reporting are still mainly with the domestic issues, while the neighbors get such coverage mainly in the case of large-scale political events, such as the mentioned ICJ process, for example. Dominant protagonists of items on Serbia and Croatia in the quality newspapers are state or state bodies and politicians, while tabloids feature somewhat more of other public figures and individual citizens as protagonists, the latter being mainly located in the crime and accidents topics, which does not seem to be conducive to better understanding of the daily life and of ‘the neighbors’ and common problem they share as ordinary citizens. The tone of reporting about the neighbor in the press is mainly neutral, i.e. informative. Still, however, some presence of negative, i.e. critical tone is evident, mainly located in the items covering war-crimes related issues, while there is also some affirmative reporting to be found, that is coverage which emphasizes positive features of the neighbor or the cooperation between the neighbors, albeit still very scant.

Two main factors seem to be linked with the type of representation of ‘the neighbor’ as established by the research. One is the ownership of the newspapers, the related focus on the profit and the associated news values. Editorial policies of the quality newspapers in both countries are marked by state participation in the ownership (50% state ownership in *Politika*; full state ownership and state funding of *Vjesnik*). Representation of ‘the neighbor’

in both newspapers is marked by the state interests, rather than by the dictate of the market. On the other hand, the tabloids are guided by the logic of profit. As the editor-in-chief of the Croatian tabloid *24 Sata* put it: “We are guided by the interest of the readers and by the interest of the owner.” Considering that the tabloid does not adhere at all to the “public interest” logic, and that it is the best selling newspaper in Croatia, the interest of readers seems to coincide in this case with the values of tabloid journalism.

The second factor are perceived needs of the readership. None of the newspapers conduct audience surveys that would guide their editorial policy and reflect on the coverage of ‘the neighbor’. Rather, they are guided by what they perceive these needs to be, base on the insights into the audience structure and key targeted audiences, and from ad-hoc reactions by the readers, and adjust the reporting accordingly. The perception is thus prone to subjective views of the editors and likely to their bias. One of the key perceptions is that the audiences are primarily interested in the domestic news considering that the newspapers are sold within the borders of their respective countries. Also, occasional negative reactions by the readers triggered by items covering Croatia or Serbia make the editors cautious when it comes to further covering of these countries.

The interplay of the above mentioned factors reflects in news values of each newspaper. Some values seem universal to both quality press and the tabloids. Such is the focus on the issues that present a problem or crisis for ‘the neighbor’, in line with the news value of *negative events* (Galtung and Ruge 1965). Also, editors of all the newspapers said that their primary interest is in the coverage of issues that concern a link or a relationship between Serbia and Croatia, considering that they perceive the interest of their audience to be first in their own country, and thus the coverage of the ‘the other’ country should preferably show a link with one’s own. Geographic and cultural *proximity* due to multiple ties that bind Serbia and Croatia, such as the language, intense unresolved conflicts, personal relations

among individual citizens, as well as increased economic cooperation, seem to be a key news value for the quality press considering that they focus on political events and processes. On the other hand, the tabloids are led by the logic of sensationalism. Thus it is the unusual, bizarre events, crime and accidents, gossip and affairs that dictate value of ‘the news’ rather than geographical location of the events or the *proximity* of Serbia and Croatia. Yet, coverage of issues related to war crimes and dealing with the past is of interest to all the newspapers due to their conflictual intensity and negativity.

Discourse Analysis – Remnants of the War-Time Discourse Reign Supreme

The topic of war crimes and dealing with the past stands out as an ongoing discursive locus of conflict and contestation in the Serbian and Croatian press, laden with the remnants of the war-time discourse. It shows that the normative role of the media in Serbia and Croatia regarding the conflict of the 1990s is trapped between two opposing media ownership models and associated news values which do not seem conducive to a constructive representation of ‘the other’. On the one hand, quality press represents the attitudes and interests of the government through the statements of politicians who promote the crimes of ‘the other side’ and shroud ‘our crimes’ in a veil of silence deepening the discursive divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’. On the other hand, the tabloids are led by the profit-generating logic of the market and the resulting sensationalism and appeal to the emotions of the readers. Their reporting features remnants of the war-time hate speech. Moreover, the editors of the tabloids are of the opinion that they need not assume a role in the attempts at reducing animosity between the countries after the conflict (Ivanuš 2009). Thus the role of the media in the resolution of the conflict seems frozen in the topical area of war crimes and dealing with the past as a consequence of

political and economic interests, originating in the ownership of the media and related influences and news values.

Common to both the quality press and the tabloids is an array of repeatedly used discursive tools which promote the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and cover ‘our’ crimes in *silence* or openly deny them while stressing the crimes of ‘the other’. ‘Our’ side is victimized, while it demands justice to be served for the perpetrators among ‘the others’. In all the newspapers the bulk of the emotional tones carrying the implied messages of animosity and strife are contained in the statements by the politicians, which testifies to the continued role of the establishment in perpetuating the animosities. Direct journalistic commentary in the text appear only sporadically. The overt language of hatred is mainly absent, except in a couple of instances of labels for the Serb perpetrators (“Chetniks” and “criminal”) in the Croatian press, remnants of the hate-speech of the 1990s. However, the Serbian tabloid *Press* features a couple of strong instances of hate speech.

Religious overtones, invoking foundational myths of the new, post-war nation, combined with symbols of banal nationalism dominate the coverage of ceremonial commemorative events in *Vjesnik*²⁹, reminiscent of the invocation of myths as a tool of political homogenization of ‘us’ against ‘them’ in the media in the 1990s. Memories and symbols from the past war are the tissue of new myth-making, forming the new heritage of the nation in the process of its identity-building. *Vjesnik* does not use representatives of Serbia as protagonists and thus limits the view of the issues to the official Croatian stance. *Politika*’s reporting is neutral only on the surface, while it is immersed in the denial of Serbian crimes and *silence* about them. *Politika* uncritically carries Serbian politicians’ statements which evoke historical episodes from World War II as an evidence that Croatian crimes against Serbs go way back before the war of the 1990s, thus fueling the spiral of animosities in the

²⁹ This is not to say that this type of coverage is specific to *Vjesnik* only. Rather, it was merely located in *Vjesnik* in this research, the limitation being that the analysis of the war crimes coverage is focused on one day only.

manner of war-time discourses, laden with historical references to the crimes of ‘the other’. Additionally, *Politika* frames the contestation over war crimes issues as a battle of the equals in which none of the sides will give up until ‘the other’ admits blame.

The tabloids display unrestrained sensationalist coverage, particularly inflammatory in the Serbian *Press*. Considering Parekh’s (2006) definition of hate-speech, it is safe to say that *Press* engages in it. It is in *Press* that we find an instance of blame being put on the Croatian nation collectively for the crimes against Serbs, while it is mainly neutrally directed at the former regime, military and paramilitaries in the Croatian press. Again, the tabloids follow the pattern of silence and denial about one’s ‘own’ crimes.

The findings confirm the observations and findings of some other researchers in the region that the hate speech in the media has generally subsided, ushering in more sophisticated forms of animosities (see Vilović 2005, Udovičić 2005, Spaić 2005). However, the discursive tools are still highly reminiscent of those used in the war-time media in the region to incite hatred, hide ‘own’ crimes and boost national homogenization. In fact, some of the same discursive patterns are being used: *silence* about ‘our’ crimes and insistence on the blame of ‘the other’; open denial of ‘own’ crimes; victimization of one’s own nation; new national myth-making, now based on the events from the war of the 1990s; references to distant past as historical ‘proofs’ of ‘the other’s’ crimes against ‘us’; as well as rare remnants of hate speech. The expectation of identifying forms of *banal nationalism* (Billig 1995) was generally not confirmed, as the more potent remnants of war discourses dominate, pushing the mundane, banal forms of nationalism to the foreground.

The set of identified discursive patterns seem to have the potential to further fuel the spiral of animosity between Serbia and Croatia despite the general absence of overt hate-speech in the forms recorded in the times of the war, considering they go against the recommended strategies for post-conflict reporting which would be conducive to conflict-

resolution and the overcoming of animosities (see Reljić 2001; Kurspahić 2003). By covering ‘our’ crimes in silence or openly denying them, a group thus refuses to accept the existence of the trauma in the other group. As Alexander (2004) explained in the book “*Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*”, this refusal to “to recognize the existence of others’ trauma” prevents the group from reaching a moral stance on the contentious issue.” (Alexander 2004: I). “By denying the reality of others’ suffering, people not only diffuse their own responsibility for the suffering but often project the responsibility for their own suffering on these others.” (Alexander 2004, I).

The scant instances of affirmative representation of ‘the neighbor’ in the topical areas of culture and some others (a total of 4 items identified in the research in all the newspapers), usually placed towards the end of the newspaper issues, are a very weak, rather insignificant counter-balance to the strong message of contestation and continued animosity that the political issues of war crimes carry, placed among the first pages of the newspapers. It is, however, possible, that other factors also influence the representation of ‘the other’ and ‘the self’, such as personal preferences of the news-makers. However, it is beyond the reach of a researcher to peek into the ‘black box’ of the individual minds in which such processes occur (Johnston 1995: 218-219).

Limitations of the research

Considering the short time available for this project, as well as limited resources, limitations to the research were inevitable. First of all, the aim was not to establish direct causal links between factors that are linked to the particular practices of the representation of ‘the neighbor’ and the actual representation patterns. Such a task would be beyond the feasible

scope of this thesis. Rather, the aim was to point towards possible links that could be further explored in terms of causality in a more ambitious research.

The analysis was based on two daily newspapers in each country – a tabloid and a quality newspaper. However, a third daily could have been included had there been more time available. A semi-tabloid would have been chosen both in Serbia and Croatia in order to capture all the distinctions of the daily publications on the existing spectrum of available dailies in the markets of the two countries.

Ideally, the time-frame of the analysis could have been longer to capture the trends of patterns of representation over the period from the end of the war to the present. However, such an elaborate project was not feasible in this case. Also, some newspapers, such as the Serbian 'Press', established in 2005, along with some other tabloids, are relatively new in the market. This would present a difficulty in analysing the newspapers over a longer time frame as some of them were not present in the market until several years ago.

Additionally, the sample of newspaper issues chosen for this research yielded a relatively small number of results on each variable. First of all, the total number of items identified as covering Serbia or Croatia was 64. Some of the variables yielded a small number of results, in the range of 5 – 20. Thus it would not be advisable to present some of the results in terms of percentages. For instance, 3 items in an analytical category in one newspaper compared to 2 in another publication, cannot be presented as 50% more, which would have been an approach in the case of larger numbers.

Although every attempt at objectivity was made by the only researcher on this project, it would be hard to vouch for a perfectly objective and unbiased analysis both in quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research. Also, the interviews as a method are expected to be subjective to an extent as they are individuals' view of reality and not to divulge certain information if it was sensitive or negative for the image of the interviewees or their news

organizations. Ideally, at least two or more editors from one media organization would have been interviewed in order to piece together as objective as possible analysis.

Recommendations for future research

A more elaborate project on the same topic, based on ampler resources and available time, would most likely successfully overcome the limitations of the present one. For instance, an ideal time-frame for the analysis would span the period since the end of the wars of the 1990s until present in order to examine in a more systematic manner the changes in the patterns of the representation of Serbia and Croatia in each other's press with the change of socio-political climate during the time. The analysis could additionally focus on major political events, those that are prominently featured in the international media as well, such as, for example, the recognition of the independence of Kosovo by Croatia. The aim would be to identify in more detail patterns of representation during such big junctures in the relations of the two countries, along with the patterns of representation in the banal, everyday reporting. An additional suggestion would be to include more newspapers in the analysis. As a minimum, three newspapers from each country would be analyzed – one at each part of the 'tabloid – semi-tabloid – quality newspaper' spectrum, so as to capture the results from the samples of the entire print media landscape.

A more extensive project, covering a longer time-frame and possibly a larger number of publications, as well as a larger sample of daily issues, would require a group of coders instead of one coder, which was the case in this project. Such a team project, involving also an inter-coder reliability check, would present a systematic attempt to avoid bias in the content analysis, which is a likely by-product of a one-person work.

Also, it would be beneficial to submit weekly magazines to a similar research as there is a discrepancy in the profiles of the most prominent weeklies in Serbia and Croatia – two in each country. Namely, the two most influential weeklies in Serbia ('Vreme' and 'NIN') maintain the image of serious analytical political publications. Croatian weeklies with the biggest circulation ('Globus' and 'Nacional'), although labeled political magazines, feature more of a sensationalist approach to current affairs. The contrast between the publications in the two countries regarding the representation of 'the other' would be an interesting research dimension.

A comprehensive comparative project examining mutual representation of several former Yugoslav countries in their print media at present (or, alternatively, covering the period since the wars of the 1990s to the present time) would be a particularly strong contribution to the understanding of the role that media play in the overcoming of animosities among the countries in the post-war times. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a particularly complex, and thus an interesting case due to the political dynamics among its three constituent peoples (Bosniacs, Serbs, and Croats) and the media landscape which is virtually divided along the lines of the two entities – Republika Srpska, the predominantly Serb entity, and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the entity with the Bosniac and Croat majority. One comparative dimension of the research would thus be the within-country analysis of print media in the two entities. The other would be the analysis across countries, namely the comparison of the coverage by the print media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. This dimension is interesting due to the strong inclinations towards and ties of the Serb entity with Serbia, and the Croat population in BiH with Croatia.

Finally, a project analyzing the representation of the neighbors in the region in the television programs would be very beneficial due to the more powerful reach of television

towards the audiences compared to that of newspapers, both in terms of numbers of viewers and the stronger impact of the televised images compared to the printed text.

APPENDIX I -- CODING SHEET

CODING SHEET

The coding sheet was developed on the basis of the one by prof. Gordana Vilović and Igor Kanižaj of the University of Zagreb for the purpose of the research '*Ethical Aspects of the (Lack of) Credibility of Newspapers*'. The present one is a significantly ammended version considering the different purpose of the present research. The author is thankful to Prof. Vilović for making the bluepring of the coding sheet available and for her kind suggestions for this project.

1) ID (unique ID of an article. Format: day/month/year/page/no. of article on the page)

2) NEWSPAPER

1. Press
2. Politika
3. 24 Sata
4. Vjesnik

3) DAY

1. Monday
2. Tuesday
3. Wednesday
4. Thursday
5. Friday
6. Saturday
7. Sunday

4) TEXT ANNOUNCED ON THE FRONT PAGE

1. yes
2. no

5) COUNTRY

1. Croatia
2. Serbia
3. BiH
4. Montenegro
5. Macedonia
6. Albania
7. Region – more than 1 country including Serbia or Croatia

6) FOCUS

1. Entirely or mainly focuses only on the country
2. Connections or links of any kind (positive or negative, past or present), including cooperation (positive or negative) between country A and B (including e.g. a suspected criminal identified as a foreign citizen committing a crime in Serbia)
3. Links of the country with the region or internationally (not involving country A)
4. Hard to assess

7) REPRESENTATION OF RELATIONS / COOPERATION

1. neutral field

2. field of contestation
3. field of cooperation

8) SECTION OF THE NEWSPAPER

1. General/Main news/News of the day
2. Region
3. International
4. Other

9) TOPIC

1. domestic political life (internal politics)
2. country's international politics
3. world affairs
4. war crimes/dealing with the past
5. economy, finance, business
6. social protection and healthcare
7. crime and accidents
8. extraordinary events (fires, floods etc.)
9. culture and art
10. education
11. science
12. ecology
13. religion
14. youth and children
15. sport and recreation
16. showbusiness - entertainment
17. life (fashion, travel etc.)
18. other
99. NA

10) SIZE/GENRE OF THE ARTICLE

1. news item and short news item (up to 10 lines)
2. short article (more than 10 lines – up to 1/2 a page)
3. article (1/2 a page to 1/1 page)
4. big article (1/1 do 2/1)
5. reportage (1-2 pages)
6. letters by readers
7. commentary/opinion piece
8. interview
9. analysis
10. brief side note
11. foto-news
12. correction
13. other

11) AUTHOR

1. journalist
2. news agency
3. edited agency news (e.g. HINA, F.P.)
4. newsroom (no byline or byline of the newsroom, e.g. Press Team)

5. other

12) AUTHOR – PROPERTIES (coded only if journalist is the author)

1. full byline: full first name and family name
2. partial byline: initial of the first name and full family name
3. initials only
99. NA

13) PROTAGONIST

1. State or state bodies
2. Politician or politicians (or other state dignitaries)
3. Other public figure or figures (show-business personalities; film authors, directors; athletes; war criminals previously state officials)
4. Individuals / citizens or groups of individuals (e.g. suspected criminals, victims of crime etc.)
5. Nation as a collective
6. Firm/Company
7. Institution/Organization (other than of state)
8. Other
99. NA

14) GENERAL TONE regarding the representation of 'the neighbor'

1. neutral (informative)
2. negative (critical)
3. discriminatory
4. affirmative
5. hard to assess

15) HEADLINE – type in

APPENDIX II – QUESTIONNAIRE

for semi-structured interviews with the editors of Serbian and Croatian print media (the interviews were conducted on May 25 and 26, 2009 in Zagreb and Belgrade with the editors of *Vjesnik*, *24 Sata*, *Politika* and *Press*)

- What is the mission of your newspaper?
- What is the target audience and structure of audience?
- How is the general editorial policy defined regarding the target audience?
- What is news for your newsroom?
- According to the findings of the research, there are a few items on neighboring countries (5 per issue of newspapers on average, some 4% of content – not including sports). How do you explain the result?
- There are some 2-3 items on average per issue covering Serbia/Croatia, which is approximately some 2% of total content. How do you explain the result?
- How is the editorial policy defined regarding the coverage of the region? I am particularly interested in Serbia.
- Does your newspaper do audience surveys? What kind and how often? Do the findings about the needs of the readers direct your editorial policy?
(If not – how do you find out about readers' needs?; If yes – what do the results of the surveys say about the audience interest in the region and Serbia / Croatia in particular?)
- Have you got a network of correspondents? In which countries do you have permanent correspondents and those who work for you on a different arrangement? Why in these countries? Have you got correspondents in the countries of the region of Western Balkans and if yes – in which countries (Serbia/Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania)?
- What is the process of cooperation of the newsroom and the correspondent from Serbia/Croatia? What is the process of decision-making regarding dynamics of reporting, topics/issues, genres and sizes of items?
- What sources other than correspondents are used for the coverage of Serbia/Croatia – news agencies, agency news edited inhouse, the Internet – various sources, inhouse journalists? What are practical reasons for a particular choice?
- Dominant size of items/genres when it comes to the coverage of Serbia/Croatia is short news, news and short articles. Analytical pieces, interview, reportage and other genres are extremely rare. Why?

- [Explain the findings regarding the distribution of items according to the topics]. What is the reason for such distribution of items?
- Why is there hardly any coverage (when it comes to items about Serbia/Croatia) of issues such as social issues, health, education, environment etc? Why isn't there more coverage of issues which are of interest to daily life of an average citizen in Serbia/Croatia so that readers in each country could draw parallels with the life in the other country?
- Dominant protagonists of items covering Serbia/Croatia are the state, state bodies and politicians. There are few of other protagonists [cite options from the coding sheet]. Why? There are also very few individual citizens as protagonists (other than in items on crime and accidents) or public personalities other than politicians, for instance from the civil sector, culture and arts etc. Why?
- What is the ownership structure of your newspaper? What is the link between the ownership and editorial policy and decisions, as well as newsroom procedures regarding the coverage of the region and Serbia/Croatia in particular?
- Is the global economic crisis reflecting on your newspaper, that is on the coverage of Serbia/Croatia in particular? If yes – how?
- Some of the possible factors that could influence coverage of other countries (in this case we are interested in the region and Serbia and Croatia in particular) are the following:
 - o Realistic audience needs (based on surveys and other sources of information)
 - o Perceived audience needs, i.e. subjective estimate of the newsroom/editors as to what the audience wants
 - o Ownership
 - o Economic reasons (available resources, financial crisis or other reasons)
 - o Organizational reasons within the news production /newsroom procedures
 - o Reasons specific to the personnel engaged in news production
 - o Crisis situations and high importance of certain events
 - o Other reasons [please state]

Please, state what reasons among these are the key ones for your newspaper when it comes to the coverage of Serbia/Croatia and the region.

Put the reasons in the order of importance.

Provide detailed explanation for each.

- Some topics / issues bear more of a critical / negative tone regarding 'the neighbor', for instance war crimes. Why?

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