

dysfunctionality and, later on, with respect to the impossibility of living together in view of their value-related and ideological differences.

4. The dispute was kept, in large measure, within a political framework and the media did not resort to aggressive calls for illegal, non-political means, except for defensive purposes, by accusing the other side of doing just that.
5. Last but not least, the political dynamics, circumstances and power structures were limiting the room for manoeuvre for the media to independently influence the instigation of hatred and hostility toward the other, which might eventually have led to violence. Full political control over the referendum by the international community was the best proof.

Chapter 7

Spinning Out of Control: Media Coverage in the Bosnian Conflict

Michal Sládeček and Amer Džihana

Introduction

This survey focuses on three key topics of the Bosnian crisis: the 1992 Bosnian referendum on independence; the 1995 signing of the Dayton agreement; and the 2006 debate on constitutional amendments. Thus, it covers the period immediately preceding the war, the period in which peace was being established and the foundations of today's Bosnia-Herzegovina constituted, as well as the contemporary period, marked by debates on the future state organization. The analysis intentionally left out an examination of the wartime media discourse, which saw the culmination of transparent war rhetoric, with an overemphasized binary division of actors and an intensified 'hate speech' as its corollary (see Bugarski 1997b, 65–8; Skopljanac-Brunner et al. 2000b; Thompson 2000). More interesting for analytical purposes is the semantic structure of texts, with their indirectly implied meanings and mobilizing/homogenizing functions, that is with indirect speech about 'us' and 'them', in which the polarization is presented in a seemingly neutral, non-evaluative and non-ideological discourse. Since we are dealing with different periods and different contexts, the survey will indicate certain transformations in discourse strategies that take place in parallel with ongoing changes and the political 'demands of the time'. At the same time, it will identify individual persistent tendencies and figures in the discourses of all three sides.

The most general historical background to be taken as a starting point is the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), within which Bosnia-Herzegovina had functioned as a federal republic for 45 years. Notwithstanding its non-democratic, one-party system and one mandatory ideology, this multi-ethnic republic was often quoted, regardless of all inevitable difficulties, as an example of the peaceful coexistence of three peoples – Muslims, Serbs and Croats, who enjoyed a balanced political representation.¹ The looming

¹ This former SFRY republic was at the forefront in the repression towards the unlike-minded and opponents of the ruling nomenclature, whereby 'we' as party members and the like-minded transformed over time into 'we' as members of an ethnic group. The 'us-them' polarization changed only its ideological valency without changing its extremely

dissolution of the SFRY, the de-legitimization of the communist ideology with the resulting revalorization and promotion of nationalist ideologies, and the start of the conflict in neighbouring Croatia all led to the (un)expected victory of ethnic parties in the first multi-party elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which, because of the domination of ethnic parties, one observer, with some exaggeration, called 'a population census'. This post-election division of the political space along ethnic lines had far-reaching consequences that are still manifest today.

In order to understand the media discourse, it is important to be familiar with the context, that is the developments parallel to the subject under examination, some recent events, political relations at the time, and so on. The context of the referendum discourse, thus, certainly includes the Serb boycott of the referendum, the massive arming of the population and the establishment of paramilitary forces, the presence of the so-called Yugoslav People's Army (positively perceived by the Serbs, ambivalently by the Bosniaks and negatively by the Croat side), the temporal and geographic proximity of the war in Croatia, as well as the first victims of interethnic conflict.

The context of the Dayton agreement is marked by a changed balance of forces on the ground, that is the military successes of the (predominantly Bosniak) Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, together with the Croat Defence Council and the Croatian Army; the sanctions against Serbia and the Serbian sanctions against the RS (Bosnian Serb Republic), as well as the new 'peacemaking' policy of the Serbian leadership. Concrete events that are part of the context include: the issuance of The Hague indictment against the Bosnian Serb civilian and military leaders Karadžić and Mladić; the indictments against high-ranking representatives of the Bosnian Croat military and political leadership; the resignations of the high-ranking Bosnian officials Sacirbey and Zubak; as well as the Serbian leadership 'persuading' Bosnian Serbs to accept the agreement.

Finally, the debate on constitutional amendments, that is on the constitutional reorganization of Bosnia-Herzegovina, proceeded in an atmosphere of fresh polarization and a fresh exacerbation of the discourse, the threat of a Serb secession referendum and the related threat of abolishing the RS by some Bosniak parties, as well as the renewed topicality of the status of the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In terms of content, reports on particular concrete events largely coincide in the media of all the three sides. In consequence, the discourse strategy is above all reflected in the form: the formulation of headlines, secondary headlines and subheadings; the report's positioning or place in the paper (central or secondary, transparent or pushed to the side); the way the information is presented, and so on. Also, reports are significant in terms of which events they keep silent about or overlook, whereby they perceive certain views or events as undesirable, as not

exclusionary character. On the persistency of this division in various discourses, see the Introduction by P. Kolstø.

fitting into the constructed perception of 'us' and 'them'.² A second basic indicator of discourse strategies is the reported statements of politicians, that is the views of public figures. Here, the politicians who had influence over these media outlets occupied a prominent place, while the views of the 'other side' were reported mostly in those cases where they fitted in with the picture that the media wished to paint. The third, clearest set of indicators of the discourse strategy includes commentaries by journalists and editors, which in a situation of mobilizing the public for certain goals, just like in uncertain situations, prevail over reporting. In most cases, commentaries contained in own reflections on the current situation (placing it in a broader social, geographic, global and historical context) are examples of a legitimizing discourse that rests on fixing the polarization between 'us' and 'them'.

When choosing the periodicals, we sought to create a sample representative of the most influential daily papers, that is the papers which largely shaped the public opinion of all three constituent peoples. *Politika* was the most influential paper in Serbia and, to a considerable extent, it also shaped the public opinion of Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Starting from the late 1980s, the paper was fully controlled by Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia. The Croatian *Večernji list* was under the direct influence of Tuđman's HDZ and is a good representative of the official views of Croatian politics vis-à-vis Bosnia-Herzegovina. Keeping in mind the fact that the Croat population in Bosnia-Herzegovina did not have their own daily newspaper, *Večernji list* indisputably influenced their public opinion the most. As for the media printed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although it did not reflect the dominant political discourse in all issues since it was not published in the Bosnian Serb wartime capital (Pale), in terms of defining the relations with Bosniaks and Croats *Glas Srpske* (earlier called *Glas* and *Glas Srpski*) was very close to the views of the Bosnian Serb leadership. *Dnevni avaz*, which started publishing in 1995 and is therefore not included in the analysis on the referendum, had the reputation of a pro-Bosniak paper close to the ruling Bosniak party SDA. The exception is *Oslobođenje* as the only paper with a civic orientation. Finally, bearing in mind the diminished influence of both Serbian and Croatian politics and media, the analysis dedicated to constitutional changes focused solely on papers published in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The period surveyed is seven days before and after the central event.

2 On the importance of an intentional passing over in silence, as well as of tacit implication emerging from the very ideological nature of the given discourse, see the introductory part of Chapter 9.

- 23 February–8 March 1992 – referendum on independence of Bosnia–Herzegovina

Analysed press:

Oslobođenje, Sarajevo

Glas, Banja Luka

Politika, Beograd

Večernji list, Zagreb

- 14 November–28 November 1995 – signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement

Analysed press:

Oslobođenje, Sarajevo

Dnevni avaz, Sarajevo

Glas Srpski, Banja Luka

Politika, Beograd

Večernji list, Zagreb

- 19 April–3 May 2006 – negotiations on the new constitutional organization of Bosnia–Herzegovina

Analysed press:

Oslobođenje, Sarajevo

Dnevni avaz, Sarajevo

Glas Srpske, Banja Luka

Nezavisne novine, Banja Luka

Dnevni list, Mostar

The Referendum on Independence

Politika and Glas: Consistently Against

In *Politika's* coverage can be observed a careful selection of personalities whose views were reported, that is attention was paid to the 'authorization' of statements or commentaries. Most of these were individuals or associations linked to developments in Bosnia–Herzegovina in a certain way, such as political representatives of Bosnian Serbs, ethnic cultural associations based in the republic or associations of Bosnian Serbs in Serbia. SDS leaders, above all R. Karadžić, were treated as people's tribunes and their statements received most attention. In a situation where the international community threatened to introduce sanctions over involvement in relations in Bosnia–Herzegovina, reporting the views of the Serbian (Yugoslav) side was avoided, except for statements addressing the most general principles, such as the insistence on a just solution, on the equality of peoples, on

the consensus of all the three sides, and so on. This way of presenting views was supposed to produce the impression of the Serbian side's non-involvement in the situation in Bosnia, i.e. of autonomy in the actions of SDS leaders as independent actors and authentic representatives of the Serb people's interests.

The views of the future organization showed an exceptional inconsistency in that the future Bosnia–Herzegovina was sometimes presented as a confederal (meaning independent) republic, whereas at other times it was seen as divided into three parts: the first part should join the third 'Yugoslavia', practically Serbia and Montenegro; the second part was Croatia; while the third part was an independent Muslim state. R. Karadžić stated: 'As far as we Serbs are concerned, we state that we are staying in Yugoslavia at any cost as its federal part. As for those who wish to leave it – have a nice trip'. However, in the preceding sentence he asserted 'Bosnia–Herzegovina is only possible as a confederation' (P. 1992. 03. 03. 5).³ On a different occasion, he maintained that 'Bosnia–Herzegovina cannot become independent before sovereignty and a sovereign space is secured for the three constituent peoples' (P. 1992. 24. 02. 1). The notion of sovereignty was thus used in two inconsistent ways: in one case, sovereignty was ascribed to a people, while in the other, the territory in which a certain people lived was sovereign.

Other options, which were declared undesirable, were a civic Bosnia–Herzegovina (because it disguises the Muslim domination) and the status quo, that is Bosnia–Herzegovina as part of the Yugoslav federation (because the Serbs were the greatest victims in the federation). The already mentioned first two options (confederation and joining Serbia) were called 'just' and were seen as corresponding to 'facticity' and the 'state of facts' – the normative was presented as the factual, and vice versa. In any decision on the future status of Bosnia–Herzegovina, the most important thing was that 'the state of facts is accepted', because a unilateral referendum solution would encourage extremism on the Serb side. The 'facts' were the ethnic division of Bosnia–Herzegovina (P. 1992. 23. 02. 1).

The reports often expressed doubts about the referendum representing the will of most citizens in favour of an independent Bosnia–Herzegovina, since 'the Croats voted for the Muslim cause only in order to secure their own departure from the rest of Yugoslavia' (P. 1992. 05. 03. 2). The referendum was considered null and void, at least by the Serb side, since only Muslims and (in part) Croats turned out. Since only 'one and a half peoples' voted, the referendum was not binding on anyone – it was 'illegal' and 'illegitimate'. A report on the course of the referendum is found only on page 8 (P. 1992. 1. 03. 8).

The coverage of the referendum was, nevertheless, pushed into the background by another event: the murder of a Serb carrying the ethnic flag during a wedding

³ The first letter is an abbreviation of the title of the newspaper (O = *Oslobođenje*; G = *Glas*; P = *Politika*; VL = *Večernji list*; DA = *Dnevni avaz*; GS = *Glas Srpski/Glas Srpske*; NN = *Nezavisne novine*; DL = *Dnevni list*). The second element is the year of publication. The next number indicates the day, the next the month and the last number is the page number.

ceremony in the very centre of Sarajevo, at Baščaršija. Although interethnic clashes resulting in several casualties had already taken place throughout Bosnia–Herzegovina, this event assumed great symbolic importance in the Serb media, and the texts about it were very emotionally charged. This crime, according to the Serb press, was a metonymy reflecting the overall position of the Serb people in an independent Bosnia–Herzegovina.⁴ As a result, this crime became a mobilizing cause, used as a warning to the others and as the assumption of an obligation for us: ‘Let the Sarajevo death be the last warning to our neighbours Muslims and Croats. The Serb people cannot and will not allow themselves to be led to the slaughterhouse with their hands tied once again. We are warning that the Serbs in Bosnia–Herzegovina are part of the entire Serb people and that all Serbs are obliged to protect them’ (P. 1992. 03. 03. 5).

Glas is a Banja Luka-based daily founded by the City Assembly. Although in the period analysed, that is immediately before the war, the city of Banja Luka was a multi-ethnic community with non-Serbs making up around one half of the population, *Glas* views reflected the views of the Serb political parties at the time.

Glas articles included few direct references to the ‘us’ vs ‘them’ polarization. In some articles, the interests of the Serb people as a whole were opposed to those of Croats and Muslims. Thus, a polarization was created in the sense that those who voted in the referendum were actually voting for an Islamic state of Bosnia–Herzegovina, while those boycotting it expressed the will to preserve Yugoslavia and avoid bloodshed. The polarization was also evident in an article in which the Bosniak political forces were accused of obstructing the Lisbon negotiations on the future of Bosnia–Herzegovina, which were in progress at the time. ‘They’ were not serious, they did not honour what had been agreed, while the SDS, that is ‘we’, kept our word, ‘firmly sticking to the position agreed in Lisbon, without any intention to make further concessions’ (G. 1992. 28. 02. 20).

On the other hand, the strategy of ‘implication’ whereby certain things were presented as common sense, well-known and self-explanatory, although these were actually arbitrary statements, was present to a much larger extent. The vote for a sovereign Bosnia–Herzegovina was thus described as ‘a knife at the throat of the Serb people’ (G. 1992. 28. 02. 1); voting in the referendum as diminishing the value of ‘honest intentions’ (G. 1992. 28. 02. 1); the SDA commitment to respecting other, non-ethnic principles as well in the new organization of Bosnia–Herzegovina as a ‘well-known’ trick (G. 1992. 28. 02. 20). On the other hand, the proclamation of the Republic of Serb Bosnia–Herzegovina was defined as the interest of the Serb people, hence ‘the Serb people took its fate into its own hands

4 ‘The killers of the Serb wedding guest are not the three attackers but those who created the atmosphere which abolished Bosnia–Herzegovina once and for all’ (P. 1992. 06. 03. 7). ‘Those are shots directed at the Serb Bosnia–Herzegovina, at the entire Serbdom’ (P. 1992. 03. 03. 5).

and did what it was forced to do’ (G. 1992. 29. 02. 20) in order not to allow others to ‘decide on its status’.⁵

An important device in the *Glas* reporting strategy was the use of the passive, intended to hide the perpetrators or to mislead the readers on certain issues. In most cases, it sought to hide those who impeded the conduct of the referendum in different ways, through phrases such as: ‘Given that ... in the days that followed events took place which are currently being investigated’ (G. 1992. 29. 02. 5); ‘Following certain problems which existed in the past three days’ (G. 1992. 1. 03. 4); ‘The local polling committee has been relocated from the premises where it was earlier not allowed to work’ (G. 1992. 2. 03. 3). The most striking example of using the passive in order to cover up the actual situation was observed in the text ‘Voting in a peaceful atmosphere’ (G. 1992. 1. 03. 4), which said that ‘the polling stations were not opened, but the interested citizens were allowed to vote in the referendum at the closest polling stations’. The citizens were prevented from voting in the referendum, but we do not know who prevented them. The author, however, placed emphasis on ‘allowing’ citizens to vote at other polling stations without specifying who made it possible for them.

Oslobođenje: Decisively in Favour

Although the referendum was organized and supported by the leading Bosniak and Croat ethnic parties – the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) and the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) – the opposition and pro-Yugoslav *Oslobođenje* endorsed it.⁶ The reason for this position was that a vote for the sovereignty of Bosnia–Herzegovina should prevent the fragmentation of the republic along ethnic lines, that is a complete ethnoterritorial division that would lead to some of its territories joining the neighbouring republics. Should its multi-ethnic core be preserved, an independent Bosnia–Herzegovina would have a Piedmont-like role in unifying the South Slav peoples and serve as a bridge between the peoples at odds.

Unlike other influential dailies in the former SFRY, *Oslobođenje* was also open to dissonant and opposing opinions both in terms of the meaning and possible consequences of the referendum. Although most reports regarding the referendum were positive, even asserting that a successful referendum was the only way out of

5 Such constructions abounded in the rhetoric of SDS chairman Radovan Karadžić. In this way, he manipulated the readers, turning indefinite things into definite, universally known facts, which is evident from the following example: ‘We know what our territory is’. Karadžić replied to questions about the actual extent of the Serb Republic of Bosnia–Herzegovina, ‘However, the plebiscite has shown us where our land is’ (G. 1992. 1. 03. 3).

6 The referendum was a condition set by the European Union for its recognition of Bosnia–Herzegovina as an independent state; it was held on 29 February and 1 March. It was boycotted by the then leading Serb party, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). Sixty-four per cent of the constituency voted for a sovereign Bosnia–Herzegovina (Official Gazette of RBiH No. 7, 27. 3. 1992), which was sufficient for the referendum to be considered valid.

the crisis, the paper quoted foreign media reports, most of which believed that this further exacerbated the crisis in Bosnia–Herzegovina, that is that the referendum made no sense without a consensus of all three sides.

One more reason for supporting the referendum was its civic character, which set it apart from other national referenda in the former SFRY. The entire strategy of this newspaper was conceived in such a way that the notions of citizen and citizenship were valued extremely positively. The ‘civic’ in most cases featured as opposite to the ‘ethnic’, understood in the sense of a particularist and ethnic-exclusionary position. The realistic possibility was, however, accepted that the very civic character of the referendum could be instrumentalized and abused. There was the danger that, by choosing to vote ‘yes’ in the referendum, citizens ‘without wanting it, at the same time also opt for the policy of ethnic parties and thus place confidence in them’ (O. 1992. 29. 02. 2). Since it was difficult to expect that the majority of voters who voted along ethnic lines in the elections would take a civic position after the referendum, the election victory of the ethnic parties relativized the civic substance of the referendum in advance.

However, the chief aim of voting on sovereignty was to prevent a division of Bosnia–Herzegovina (O. 1992. 29. 02. 2). ‘It solidifies the republic’s “independent” position’, above all vis-à-vis the neighbouring states – Serbia and Croatia (O. 1992. 28. 02. 3). With the referendum, the danger of having parts of Bosnia–Herzegovina becoming provinces of one of these states was avoided, as well as that of a division into ethnic cantons. According to one headline, a vote in the referendum was ‘a Vote against Cantonization’ (O. 1992. 28. 02. 5), while another headline suggested ‘Cantonization – a High Treason’ (O. 1992. 01. 03. 11). A referendum on sovereignty should make possible a civic legal organization based upon which a fresh ‘interest-based rapprochement’ of all former Yugoslav peoples and states could take place in the future (O. 1992. 28. 02. 2). The idea of integration, that is the idea of a coexistence of different faiths and nations, lay at the core of the ‘Bosnian idea’.

Given the civic and non-nationalist character of *Oslobođenje*, the very figure of the ‘other’ had a special form in it: it designated a group that was non-civic, non-tolerant and not used to living in a pluralist and multi-cultural community. Therefore, those who put up barricades in Sarajevo could not be Sarajevans in their very character: ‘Those who have caused the current chaos in Sarajevo are certainly not Sarajevans, because they simply cannot be that. Sarajevo has never allowed such things. This is not in the spirit of the centuries-old moral, human and cultural tradition of its inhabitants’ (O. 1992. 02. 03, special edition, 1).⁷

However, this strategy of portraying the ‘other’ as a stranger did not prove sustainable. The admission by A. Izetbegović was thus quoted, that the events in

⁷ According to *Oslobođenje*, the killers of the wedding guest at Baščaršija, hate-mongers and barricade-builders were not only not Sarajevans; they were not even true Bosnians, but strangers (the headline on the erection of the first barricades is indicative here – ‘Strangers in the Night’).

Bosnia–Herzegovina had initially been coordinated from Belgrade, but that local politicians subsequently became more aggressive than those from Belgrade, so that extremism was not imported from outside but had developed within Bosnia–Herzegovina itself (O. 1992. 04. 03. 1). Finally, a press release saying that the killers of the wedding guest at Baščaršija were from Bosnia–Herzegovina and Sarajevo was published although the news was completely pushed to one side (O. 1992. 04. 03. 20). This was, at the same time, a modest admission that, despite its tradition of coexistence and tolerance, the city was not immune to ‘mountain-dweller’ tribal extremism and even the urban Bosnia–Herzegovina was still far from a civic Bosnia–Herzegovina.

Večernji list: Decisively in Favour, but Consistently Against

By contrast to the media rhetoric in Bosnia–Herzegovina at the time, the Croatian media did not talk about potential integration. The dominant view was that against any Yugoslav community since it had, reportedly, always been a ‘grave’ for Croats and Muslims. All Muslims and Croats were invited to take part in the referendum in order to ‘break the backbone’ of Yugoslavia, which ‘has not deserved anything else’ (VL. 1992. 28. 11. 8). A thread running through the speech was the argument about Bosnia–Herzegovina as ‘the backbone’ of Yugoslavia, as the central republic which had been of key importance for integration in the former state, so that ‘to break the backbone’ figuratively meant to prevent the possibility of any new union.

Typical of the media discourse on other nations was the lack of distinction between the people and the then leadership and its policy. The Serbs were identified with the greater Serbian policy, marked by ‘depravity, chameleon-like adaptability and unscrupulousness’ (VL. 1992. 29. 11. 17). The Serb side was portrayed as the one constantly seeking a proxy-cause for war, but these were ‘products of a petty, cunning vegetable market con artist who, ingratiating himself with the buyer [meaning America] manages to understand what the buyer actually wants ... And so, the Westerner [who cannot be bothered to fathom the Balkan reality] allows the Serb, who has cheated him, to go on deceiving and lying’ (VL. 1992. 06. 03. 2). A sovereign Bosnia–Herzegovina suited most of the people, ‘but not the Serbs, who have shown their true face and imperial aspiration in the war against Croatia’.

Hypocrisy, cynicism and slyness were ascribed to Muslims, who would, by virtue of being the most numerous people, want to turn Bosnia–Herzegovina into a predominantly Muslim state.⁸ On the other hand, it was suggested that Croatia faced the threat of cooperation between the Muslim and Serb sides, which the author of the article believed would lead to the disappearance of Croats. The only

⁸ Izetbegović was described as ‘resolute’ in quotation marks, which implied an ironic distance. Those who wanted a sovereign Bosnia–Herzegovina through peaceful means, without a single shot fired, were described – also in quotation marks – as Muslim ‘moderates’, while their behaviour was described as national cowardice (VL. 1992. 05. 03. 2).

solution on offer seemed to be radical: 'In order to be able to prospectively realize any solution that would be more just, in the above context the Croats must first become appropriately credible in military terms' (VL. 1992. 06. 03. 2). Finally, some articles discussed war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had not started yet at the time, as though it were a fait accompli: 'For its inhabitants, war in Herceg-Bosnia seems to be the necessary hell on the road to freedom' (VL. 1992. 06. 03. 2).

As for debates on the future state organization, the very topic and meaning of the referendum were pushed into the background in the reports, while the legal and political status of the Croats, that is the interethnic structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina, were in the foreground. The Serb side (SDS) advocated a confederate state, the Muslim side (SDA) a unitary state and only the Croat side (HDZ) advocated a federal Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'which will have designated ethnic areas' (VL. 1992. 24. 11. 9). These parties were referred to as 'people's' parties, which was supposed to bestow on them additional legitimacy. The modifier 'people's' implied that the other ethnic parties, including those 'ethnic' parties that did not fit into the ethnopolitical *mainstream*, did not represent the people, that they were not 'people's'. Similar to the case in the Serb media, the confusion between the sovereignty of peoples and territorial sovereignty was perpetuated, wherein, depending on political needs, sovereignty was sometimes on the side of the people (regardless of its size in the given area), while at other times it was the territory in which one people was the majority that was sovereign.

We can conclude that in the discourse of *Večernji list* the referendum itself was used as an instrument, just like the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina's sovereignty. Information on the referendum and sovereignty was 'overlaid' by information on the status of peoples in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that is the importance attached to them was determined by their relationship to partial ethnic self-determination. The referendum did not change anything since the interests of the three sides remained different, which was an 'irrefutable fact'. The lack of a common civic interest was not even considered to be a shortcoming: 'The Croats do not want to substitute the sovereignty of the Croat people in Bosnia-Herzegovina by a civic state, perhaps even a unitary one, in which outvoting by one people would be a constant threat ... One of the worst and most pernicious scenarios would be for it to be exclusively some sort of a civic state!' (VL. 1992. 29. 11. 17).

The Dayton Agreement

Politika and Glas Srpski: 'There is No Alternative to Peace', or 'We Have Achieved as Much as Our Maturity as a People Permits'

Of all the analysed papers, *Politika* was instrumentalized the most by the ruling political structures and, as a result, there can be found in it almost no criticism of the Serbian government policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although the rhetoric about the Serb people as a victim of aggression and genocide persisted,

a significant shift is noticeable in identifying political goals, the discourse being considerably more measured compared with that of 1992.⁹ More extreme views occupied mostly a marginal position in the paper, with less important personalities being presented as their champions. Thus, the mayor of Banja Luka was quoted as saying that 'the unification with Serbia is yet to follow' (P. 1995. 22. 11. 13), while the Loznica SPS municipal board stated that 'the River Drina remains the backbone of the Serb people' (P. 1995. 23. 11. 13).

Conspicuous in *Politika's* discourse is the absence of references to the RS leadership, the main political representatives of the Bosnian Serb side – it should be noted here that the non-recognition of the Serb side and its representatives as equal partners in political decision-making in Bosnia-Herzegovina used to feature in the media as one of the chief causes of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Bosnian Serb leadership was not mentioned in reports before the signing of the agreement, while their negative assessment of the agreement was mentioned only in marginal positions. Only in an article published two days after the initialling was it mentioned, through a report from *The Guardian*, that M. Krajišnik had described the Dayton agreement as 'a big mistake'; however 'this is the view of a small group of people seeking to continue the war' (P. 1995. 23. 11. 2).

It was demonstrated that the centre of decision-making was on the other side, embodied in the Serbian president, who was at the centre of all media attention. The Serb side was portrayed as constructive and cooperative vis-à-vis the agreement, while the disunited Bosniak side, which tried to 'grab' as much territory as possible for its 'Muslim state' (A. Izetbegović) or aspired to a unitary Bosnia-Herzegovina (H. Silajdžić), was identified as the main obstacle (P. 1995. 17. 11. 1). The negotiations were burdened with a number of negotiators 'looking at things from a war perspective, from the trenches', while 'we did not have such a burden in this respect, which allowed us to be in a better position' (P. 1995. 27, 28, 29 and 30. 11. 2).

Nevertheless, the central position in the discourse was occupied by the figure of Serbian president Slobodan Milošević who, even before the start of the negotiations, was described by the official propaganda as 'the key factor of peace' in the former Yugoslav region. 'There is no alternative to peace' was perhaps the most frequently quoted slogan of Milošević's of the time, which the pro-regime media repeated ad nauseam. After the initialling of the Dayton agreement, texts were dominated by accolades in the form of letters to Slobodan Milošević, which often crossed the line of good taste. The victory of 'the wise policy of President Slobodan Milošević and his statesman-like preparedness and courage in being full of understanding for others as well while saving his own people and his citizens' was glorified (P. 1995. 22. 11. 13). Congratulating the president were also the director-general of the

⁹ Hand in hand with the notorious role of the victim goes the strategy of rejecting blame for crimes committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When probably the greatest war crime committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina – the one in Srebrenica – was discussed, the mentioned crimes of the Serb side were duly preceded by the adjective 'alleged'.

Yugoslav Railways Union, the Serbian Teachers' Association, the Produkt bakery, the Peć health centre, the director of the Pančevo glass plant, Pirot's Tigar rubber plant and the French philosopher and author Daniel Schiffer, while Montenegrin culture minister Gojko Čelebić said that even literature would be different after the Dayton peace (P. 1995. 23. 11. 13). This writing style culminated with the report that the SPS municipal board in Požega 'has endorsed ... the proposal of the SPS executive board of Zlatibor district to propose Slobodan Milošević as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize' (P. 1995. 24. 11. 12).

In keeping with the universal trend of adding the possessive 'Serb' to the names of cities, institutions and toponyms, during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina the *Glas* newspaper changed its name to *Glas Srpski*. Although departing to a certain extent from both the new 'conciliatory' discourse of the Serbian/Yugoslav leadership and the militant position of the then Serb leadership in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the discourse positions of *Glas Srpski*, nevertheless, accurately reflected the political discourse of Bosnian Serbs at the time in terms of defining Bosniaks and Croats, the relationships with them and the prospects of coexistence. The main features of this media/political discourse included the premises that the war had been imposed on the Serbs (GS. 1995. 20. 11. 1); that the ultimate goal of the Serb struggle was to create the state of Republika Srpska and have it united with Serbia (GS. 1995. 20. 11. 1); that the agreed peace was unjust towards the Serbs (GS. 1995. 22. 11. 1); and that the most that the Serbs wanted, according to the messages dispatched, in their coexistence with the Bosniaks was fair neighbourly relations, but by no means living together (GS. 1995. 23. 11. 1). The positions adopted by *Glas* were most evident in the very headlines since they most explicitly expressed editorial views vis-à-vis the dominant political discourse.

The analysed newspaper texts did not contain many references to the identity of any of the Bosnian peoples. However, when indications of identity were given, they promoted 'our' side, or noted things that should be rectified with 'us', while completely anathematizing 'them'. The Serbs were, above all, courageous, as Biljana Plavšić said about the inhabitants of Serb Sarajevo: 'Those are heroic people and every child there has deserved a hero's medal' (GS. 1995. 23. 11. 1).¹⁰ A note from the Orašje front described the characteristics of Croat fighters, as well as of the Croat people as a whole. It was asserted that 'apart from lacking intelligence, the Croats also lack words for basic cultural and mediatic achievements', and that 'this completely deluded people would not even dream of peace, at least when it comes to Posavina' (GS. 1995. 20. 11. 4). An analysis described Bosniaks, on the other hand, as converted Turks whose hatred of Serbs remained immune to change, and their spiritual values as 'evil looks, ugly proverbs and obscene gestures' (GS. 1995. 22. 11. 2). The relations between the Croats and Bosniaks in the newly established Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina were described through

10 On the other hand, one commentary noted that the Serbs were not united and that they often worked against their own interests: 'At this point in history, we have achieved as much as our maturity as a people permitted' (GS. 1995. 23. 11. 1).

the metaphor 'Ljuta guja Latinkinja gurnuta je u muslimanska njedra' [A Latin viper pushed into the Muslim bosom] (GS. 1995. 23. 11. 2).

Very frequent in the analysed period was the use of implicit messages in which meanings assumed to be 'commonsensical' were added to the core meaning. The expressions 'the former Bosnia', 'the Muslim government in Sarajevo', and the like, implied that Bosnia-Herzegovina did not exist as a state, although it was an internationally recognized country at the time. Implicit messages were also used when commenting on the results of the Dayton agreement. Thus, it was implied that the war had been started by the others (GS. 1995. 20. 11. 1), as well as that it had been planned in the global centres of power (GS. 1995. 23. 11. 1), and that the Bosniaks had 'staged' the massacre of Sarajevans at the Markale market (GS. 1995. 21. 11. 3).

Dnevni avaz and Oslobođenje: 'Minimum Equity' with 'A Firm Fixing of Territorial Delineation'

Comparing commentaries and reports published at the time of the Dayton negotiations, it may be noted that the commentaries of *Dnevni avaz*, a paper close to the Bosniak political leadership, were more 'extreme' than the reports themselves. One analyst (DA. 1995. 20. 11) was against the position of the Bosnia-Herzegovina leaders on ceding the Posavina corridor to the Republika Srpska, that is the concession to the Serb side which was accepted by both the Croatian and the Bosnian president and was a condition for the definitive signing of the Dayton agreement and for establishing peace. Another commentary (DA. 1995. 23. 11. 4) did not distinguish between the Serb leadership and the Serb people, acknowledging that the views of one of the Serb leaders, M. Krajišnik, on not accepting the Dayton agreement and on the necessity to divide Sarajevo along ethnic lines were actually the views of Serbs themselves.¹¹

Analogous to the reports of the Croat and Serb sides, the coverage by this Bosniak paper on the course of the peace negotiations stressed the constructive behaviour of its own side, while ascribing obstruction to the others. The new demands of the Serb side regarding the Brčko corridor were, thus, described as the main obstacles to reaching an agreement (DA. 1995. 21. 11. 1), while a different article on the same page discussed the obstruction and possible collapse of the negotiations because of Tuđman's disagreement regarding Posavina.

Statements by Bosniak politicians regarding the results of the peace agreement were based on the reiterated view that the peace was unjust, yet more

11 The conclusion on which the entire text was based was that the agreement was good just because the Serbs were not happy with it. The 'negative' logic prevailed, that is views in which the dissatisfaction or a bad situation of the other (an entire people) prompts our approval. This 'negative' logic is also evident in *Oslobođenje* in some cases, with the important distinction that the desirability of the plan was derived from the dissatisfaction of the Pale Serb leaders (O. 1995. 23. 11. 2).

just than a continuation of the war, because 'a bitter pill had to be swallowed' and, pressures notwithstanding, a minimum of equity had been achieved. The international recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its existing borders and of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a 'single, although now decentralized' state was noted as an advantage of the agreement; however, the latter statement implied that a decentralized state was in some way worth less than a unitary/centralized state. Decentralization was perceived in some cases as something inappropriate in and of itself and contrary to integration, which can be seen from an interview with H. Silajdžić (DA. 1995. 24. 11. 2). A parallel can be drawn here to the rhetoric in Serbia at the time of the rise of Milošević, when decentralization was perceived negatively, as a threat to national unity and the integrity of the state.

Faithful to its discourse and political orientation, *Oslobođenje* saw territorial division along ethnic lines as a defeat of the civic alternative, that is as a failure of the approach that would rest on the sovereignty of an individual/citizen. The dominant policy was based on 'ethnic premises' and was 'the origin and cause of all division' (O. 1995. 14. 11. 1). Hence, a 'broader political basis' than an exclusively ethnic basis was needed, which would lead to an 'open society' that would 'reconcile ethnic and civic interests' and start 'establishing democratic institutions' (O. 1995. 23. 11. 1). Unlike *Dnevni avaz*, which mostly conveyed the views of the ruling structure or views that the ruling structure would accept as desirable, *Oslobođenje* reported (mostly negative) views of the Bosnian opposition on the territorial division. The opposition wondered why the Federation authorities were sorry about Posavina or Srebrenica (which now belonged to the RS) if Bosnia-Herzegovina was a single country and if the boundary line was but 'a line of demarcation' and not a border (O. 1995. 26. 11. 6).

Given its consistent position and its status as an opposition paper, which did not oblige it to remain silent about internal agreements and tactical alliances, *Oslobođenje* used a less diplomatic vocabulary than the pro-government *Dnevni avaz* when writing about Milošević and Tuđman. Serbian president Milošević was said to be 'the most responsible for all the evil in the region' and was called a 'Führer'¹² (O. 1995. 15. 11. 6). In alluding to his native Veliko Trgovišće, Croatian president Tuđman was referred to as a 'trgovac' (trader) in other people's territories (O. 1995. 27. 11. 4).

Oslobođenje exhibited a more pronounced scepticism when it came to the prospects of an ethnically divided Bosnia-Herzegovina. The author of a commentary published on the cover page on the day the Dayton agreement was initialled wondered if the initials might be announcing a definitive division of Bosnia-Herzegovina (O. 1995. 14. 22. 1). Built into the agreement were 'so

12 Nevertheless, in some cases it is not quite clear who exactly was meant with the division into 'us' and 'them' – the people or the leadership that initiated the crimes – as is the case with the (alleged) 'immeasurable mental barrier' between 'us' and 'them' (O. 1995. 24. 11. 6), where it is not clear if 'them' denoted the Pale 'criminal leadership' or the entire people.

many tired compromises and deep disagreements, so many unnatural divisions and corridors' that a question mark constantly hung over its implementation. Nevertheless, the hope was expressed in some articles that 'economy and money will put things in the right place' and that economic welfare for all would enable civil reintegration, and achieve the desire of ordinary people to live in peace (O. 1995. 25. 11. 4).

Večernji list: 'Croatia – The Only Winner?'

Similar to *Politika*, *Večernji list* sought to present its side as the winner in the Dayton agreement, although the victory was not personified in the figure of a faultless leader as it was in *Politika*. Instead, the policy of the Croat leadership was considered to be the winner. There were ample quotes from foreign media which referred to the Croat side as 'the unquestionable winner of the Dayton negotiations'. The Croatian role was considered to be 'decisive' for the agreement, since 'several important proposals of the Croatian delegates' had been accepted. An article with the big headline 'Croatia – the only Certain Winner' conveyed British press reports on the completion of the negotiations (VL. 1995. 21. 11. 15). The official reaction, dominant in *Večernji list* as well, was based on the alleged moral superiority and solid moral arguments of their own side, which had to take a back seat to the other moral imperative – stopping the war – as well as to the world's realpolitik. Also similarly to *Politika*, in *Večernji list* the opposite side was accused of obstructing the negotiations. 'Milošević Only for Bargaining' was a typical secondary headline, while one article said: 'The only dispute concerns Brčko, where the Serb side has unrealistic demands' (VL. 1995. 21. 11. 3).

Although justice was on our (Croat) side, the imposed interests of the great powers had to be recognized and less pleasant concessions agreed to. Even though, according to some texts, a division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three ethnic parts would be more favourable, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be weak enough and would, of necessity, fall in Croatia's sphere of interest: 'If we act wisely, the Federation will develop extremely friendly ties with and become strategically/politically and economically dependent on Croatia' (VL. 1995. 25. 11. 4).

Regardless of changes in the official Croat policy, above all that of the Republic of Croatia itself, it was not felt necessary in the media presentation to examine the earlier policy, which largely collided with the policy in this period. Thus, there was no criticism of the Croat-Bosniak war or of the establishment of the Croat state (and *de jure* irredentist) 'entity' Herceg-Bosnia. Herceg-Bosnia was reportedly a vital condition for the Croats: they would not have survived in Bosnia-Herzegovina without it (VL. 1995. 20. 11. 5). While this entity was described as the only guarantee of the survival of Croats and the army of Bosnian Croats as 'defence' units, the Serb army was referred to as a 'para-army' and the RS as a 'parastate', regardless of their concurring war objectives (a separate state) and methods (ethnic cleansing).

The Bosniak side enjoyed little better treatment than the Serb side. The Croat people had been forced to 'organize resistance' against the Yugo-communist army due to the 'the lack of preparedness and shortsightedness of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina' (VL. 1995. 15. 11. 8). 'Bosnia would have collapsed more than two years ago had it not been for the Bosnian Croat army', but 'when the territory lost in the Serb aggression needed to be made up for elsewhere, they [Muslims] were very effective, and hundreds of thousands of Croats/Catholics had to flee in the face of the Muslim onslaught' (VL. 1995. 16. 11. 9.; VL. 1995. 19. 11. 19). 'Our' war was, of course, a 'defensive' war in both cases (VL. 1995. 18. 11. 6). Since the figure of the aggressor was reserved for the Serb side, problems with words occurred when the conflict between the Croat and Muslim sides needed to be described. As has been seen, the war with Muslims was described as 'unfortunate' in several places and referred to as a 'conflict', while the war-waging by the Serb side was an 'aggression'.

A parallel could not be drawn between the crimes themselves, as some were trying to do abroad: while the other sides had perpetrated 'systematic' crimes, i.e. planned and prepared in advance, our side had perpetrated 'individual' crimes (VL. 1995. 21. 11. 4). The entire rhetoric was continuing the discourse blueprint accepted in advance, according to which crimes could be committed only by the other side, meaning the Serbs, and, as the occasion might require, the Muslims (who were to blame for the expulsion of 'some hundred thousand Croat civilians'). An article reporting the statement of the Swedish police that around 20 suspects for war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia were in Sweden said that the identity and ethnicity of the suspects was not revealed because this was not allowed under the local laws (VL. 1995. 22. 11. 11). The content, however, did not prevent the article from being headlined 'Serb Criminals also in Sweden'.

Constitutional Changes

Significant Steps Forward, with a Pronounced Focus on Separate Readerships

The winter of 2005 and the spring of 2006 saw attempts by the most relevant Bosnian parties, with the mediation of international representatives led by the USA, to agree on changes to the Bosnia-Herzegovina constitution adopted in Dayton as Annex IV to the Framework Agreement for Peace. In a session that began on 25 April and lasted until the early hours of the following day, only to be continued on 27 April, the parliament failed to take a two-thirds majority decision on adopting amendments to the constitution.¹³ Many advocates of constitutional change noted that this was the first time since Dayton that reform was carried out through an agreement between local political forces. However, it is also true that on the issue

¹³ Of 42 MPs, 26 voted for and 16 against, which means that two votes were missing for this majority.

of constitutional reform atypical political coalitions were created for the first time since the war that were not based exclusively on ethnonational criteria.

In the period surveyed, great progress in professional terms was registered in media reports. Thus, the voices of different peoples and different political orientations appeared in all newspapers and, in a large number of cases, the authors of newspaper articles themselves came from different ethnic groups. In addition, correct titles were used for different actors of political life, be they from a different ethnic group or a different political bloc.

Typical of reporting in all the newspapers analysed during this period was the dominant use of news forms, which above all conveyed statements by actors of constitutional changes (statement/press release) and described developments in parliament (news item/report), while the use of analytical forms, such as commentaries or notes, was reduced to a minimum in most newspapers. In this way, the visibility of journalistic interventions was significantly reduced, and the impression was given that the newspapers were actually only a channel through which politicians expressed their views and opinions on up-coming constitutional changes.

Glas Srpske and Nezavisne novine

Although *Glas Srpske* published only one commentary on constitutional changes, its editors commented on the process of constitutional changes more conspicuously than the others through headlines, subheadings and text boxes, while journalistic commentaries were sometimes inserted in the very text of a report. Thus, interpreting the demand of the independent MP Sead Avdić to abolish entity-based voting, a journalist wrote in the report 'Denouement or imbroglio': 'This means that Avdić is asking for what Serb MPs will not agree to at any cost' (GS. 2006. 25. 04. 5).

Glas Srpske portrayed the debate on constitutional changes as a battle for the survival of the Republika Srpska. On the one hand, there were *those* who wished the RS to disappear, as suggested by the headlines: 'Traps have Remained Empty' (GS. 2006. 21. 04. 5); 'We do not Want Petty Deceptions' (GS. 2006. 19. 04. 1); and 'Wool over the Eyes' (GS. 2006. 21. 04. 5). On the other hand, there were those who fought for the survival of the Republika Srpska and who sent the messages 'No Bargaining over the RS' (GS. 2006. 20. 04. 2) and 'No Wind Could Blow the Srpska Away' (GS. 2006. 29. 04. 2).

Against the emphasis on unity and determination in defending the RS, *Glas* was stressing the message of disunity and uncertainty when it came to the future of Bosnia-Herzegovina, that is to coexistence with other peoples.

Nezavisne novine, on the other hand, approached constitutional changes as a purely technical issue. It gave space almost exclusively to advocates of constitutional changes, as well as to international representatives, while the voices of radical opponents of constitutional changes from the RS were completely ignored. The messages sent suggested that the proposed constitutional changes

should lead to a faster development of the country. The only thing that *Nezavisne* was trying to underline for its readers was that in the announced second phase of constitutional changes there would be 'No Pressures to Abolish the RS' (NN. 2006. 21. 04. 3). Although mostly focusing on Serb readers, *Nezavisne novine* also sought to address other Bosnian peoples as well, reporting to a large extent on Croat and Bosniak debates on the constitution.

By contrast, *Glas Srpske* focused almost exclusively on discussions by Serb political players, while the dilemmas of non-Serb political parties were presented in the context of the 'other'. The newspaper's editors did not hesitate to apply metonymic reasoning and turn only a section of the Croat and Bosniak political parties that opposed the constitutional changes into all 'Bosniaks' and all 'Croats', as was done in the headline 'Bosniaks Would Like to Abolish the Republika Srpska, Croats are in Favour of Four Regions, and the Serbs of Preserving the Essence of the Dayton Agreement' (GS. 2006. 29. 04. 5). In addition, *Glas Srpske* also invoked the hopelessness of war by uncritically conveying open calls for a fresh conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The statement by the head of the Republika Srpska Association of Camp Inmates that 'Our representatives must not accept these constitutional changes, even at the cost of what happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina repeating itself' (GS. 2006. 20. 04. 2) was thus reported without any comment.

Dnevni avaz and Oslobođenje

With *Dnevni avaz*, the pronounced use of forms of news journalism served the strategic goal of hiding its siding with the opponents of the constitutional changes, because this meant an overt conflict with international representatives, who strongly endorsed the constitutional changes. Hence, there was a marked use in *Avaz* of the statement/press release form, as well as of the form of report (which describes events, but also relates participants' statements), whereby statements of numerous international representatives were correctly conveyed. The newspaper tried to impose the image of objectivity by an almost complete absence of analytical forms. Although *Avaz* is not particularly known as a paper with recognizable commentators, the absence of any serious commentaries on the topic of constitutional changes is still symptomatic. A rubric *Commentary of the Day* did exist, but during the period of analysis commentators did not write about constitutional changes one single time.

On the other hand, *Oslobođenje* was at the forefront of all the other newspapers in using analytical forms, giving space to analysts with different views to express their opinions of the constitutional changes. While the commentaries by *Oslobođenje*'s external contributors identified numerous difficulties and illogical elements regarding the upcoming constitutional changes, the paper's editor clearly sided with the advocates of the constitutional changes. Although *Oslobođenje* managed to secure commentator voices coming from different peoples, most of the authors were from Sarajevo.

Both *Oslobođenje* and *Avaz* wrote the most about the dilemmas faced by the Bosniak and non-ethnic parties. In news items and reports, the norms of professional reporting were, for the most part, adhered to, and the newspapers did not openly side with either of the opposing camps. Nevertheless, in several texts *Dnevni avaz* presented only the positions of opponents of the constitutional changes (DA. 2006. 19. 04. 2), or, even more effectively, from the Federation the positions of the opponents were presented, and from the Republika Srpska those of the advocates of the constitutional changes, which emphasized the 'us vs them' polarization with the Bosniak readership (DA. 2006. 21. 04. 9).

Dnevni list

Through reports on the process of constitutional changes, *Dnevni list* aimed to appeal in a certain measure not only to the Croat readership, although it is obvious that most space was given to discussions conducted between Croat political parties. A good indicator of the focus of the papers analysed, including *Dnevni list*, on different ethnic audiences are headlines taken from the statements by the senior US administration official Rosemary DiCarlo. While *Nezavisne novine* used as a headline 'There will be no Pressures to Abolish the RS' (DL. 2006. 21. 04. 3), *Dnevni list* singled out in a headline 'The Constitutional Changes do not Threaten the Croats' (DL. 2006. 21. 04. 3). The Mostar-based *Dnevni list* reported rather correctly on debates within the Croat community, without neglecting either the opponents or the advocates of the constitutional changes. However, it can be seen that a slight preference was, nevertheless, conferred on the opponents of the constitutional amendments since only Martin Raguž, one of the prominent opponents of the changes, was granted the opportunity to give an interview (DL. 2006. 28. 04. 3).

The impression is given that, by presenting the debates within the Croat community, *Dnevni list* sought to avoid fanning the conflict between the opposing sides. In analyses following the parliament debacle, commentators did not try to stress the triumph or defeat of any side, but rather pointed to the essential problems that remained after this outcome (DL. 2006. 28. and 29. 04. 2). However, this intention of calming down passions is not evident in the analyses regarding the Bosniak participants in the debate on the constitutional changes, which accused the opponents of the changes of careerism (DL. 2006. 29. 04. and 02. 05. 2).

Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the aim of the survey was to analyse the media discourse in the context of a particular key event. In this sense, the discourse strategy was adapted to the given political and social circumstances. We, therefore, focused on similarities in portraying 'us' and 'the others' between different papers in one and the same period, as well as on the continuity and discontinuity of the

media discourse of one and the same daily (or of the most influential media of one and the same ethnic group) in different periods of time. In 1992 and 1995, ethnic papers often failed to make a distinction between the political authorities of the other ethnic group and the people itself, whereby permanent traits and intentions, directed against 'us', were ascribed to the people in question (and the other peoples). No explicit discourse of xenophobia or ethnic intolerance is to be observed in the papers in 2006, regardless of whether the political discourse maintained a clear polarization between 'us' and 'them'. The other side was no longer described as criminal, but was considered responsible for the committed crimes and the political crisis, as well as for obstructing change and wanting to dominate. In the same sense, unlike the case in the discourse from the previous periods, a distance vis-à-vis political elites is evident in the media, irrespective of the views of those elites and their attempts to present themselves as representatives of an entire – and exclusively their – people.

The comparison between different daily newspapers in one and the same period of time, together with the comparison of the papers' discourse in different periods of time, has allowed us to show the media discourse in all its dynamics and transformation, and the way in which the discourse, adapting itself to the changed situation, presents that situation, but also produces its own field of political and social reality, filtered and (re)constituted by the media. Up to the most recent period, media representation, that is the media discourse, on the one hand, and the discourse strategies of political players, on the other, constituted a single narrative with identical 'stereotyping' and 'confabulations'. Although the discourse of politics itself has to undergo a significant transformation in order to be equally acceptable to all citizens, it depends on the media themselves whether they will continue 'reflecting' the ruling political views, or rather strive towards their own autonomy. After all, this autonomy is an important condition for the very necessary de-homogenization of self-perception and the perception of the other.

Chapter 8

'Spinning Out of Control': Mutual Reinforcement Discourse in Macedonia?

Zhidas Daskalovski

Introduction

Hailed as an exemplary case of successful interethnic cooperation, Macedonia surprised analysts and diplomats when it almost surged into a full-blown civil war in the first half of 2001. Led by Ali Ahmeti, the previously unknown National Liberation Army (NLA) – a motley group of former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters from Kosovo and Macedonia, Albanian insurgents from the south-east Serbian regions of Preshevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, young Albanian radicals and nationalists from Macedonia, and foreign mercenaries – between February and August 2001 organized an armed insurrection against the Macedonian government (Bellamy 2002, 132).¹ Following prolonged warfare, and with emotions running high among government officials and ordinary Macedonians and Macedonian Albanians, the danger of civil conflict was real. The international community, led by the European Union, reacted swiftly by producing the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the pacification of the NLA, thus ending the conflict.

This chapter examines the relationship between media discourse and conflict development in Macedonia in the early 2000s. It investigates how the 'self' and the 'other' were presented in the media discourse in three different time periods: before the conflict of 2001; during the scandalous affair concerning the eavesdropping of politicians and public officials which lasted for approximately one month from mid-January to mid-February; during the conflict, approximately six months from mid-February to August 2001; and after the conflict, during the campaign for the parliamentary elections of 2002, which was a moment in history when the 'wounds of the war' were still fresh. Our aim is to determine whether the media discourse in the Macedonian and Albanian languages was inflammatory and hate reinforcing.

In order to do this, we juxtapose the rhetoric of the press in the Macedonian and Albanian languages with statements made by the leadership of the NLA, the international discourse, as well as with the actual NLA deeds during the conflict. First, a brief overview of the conflict is provided, then the media discourse is

¹ The National Liberation Army's acronyms are ONA in Macedonian and UCK in Albanian. The latter is also the acronym of the Kosovo Liberation Army.