

Western Newspapers and the War in Croatia

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ABSTRACT

At the time of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the beginning of the war in Croatia in 1991, the Balkans were not in the focus of Western politics, which was preoccupied with the collapse of the USSR and the Gulf War. The dominant position of Western policy was the preservation of Yugoslavia and the maintenance of geopolitical stability. In the second half of 1991, under the influence of the war in Croatia, Western policy slowly turned towards the possibility of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. The article analyzes the American and British newspaper narratives about the war in Croatia during the five-month peak of the conflict, from September 1991 to January 1992. The analysis was conducted on four daily newspapers, two American (The New York Times, Los Angeles Times) and two British (The Independent, The Guardian). A total of 920 texts were analyzed through coding based on the adoption of a pro-Croatian, pro-Serbian, or neutral position. The research shows that more texts about the war in Croatia were published in the analyzed British newspapers. Secondly, the narrative is significantly marked by a neutral stance, which coincides with the unclear and undefined policy of the West towards the Yugoslav crisis. Thirdly, there were significantly more pro-Croatian than pro-Serbian texts in the analyzed period.

Key words: dissolution of Yugoslavia, war in Croatia, British newspapers, American newspapers, newspaper narratives

Introduction

The dissolution of Yugoslavia and the wars that ensued are part of a larger process of the collapse of communist regimes in Europe and the end of the Cold War. This is crucial for understanding Western policy towards the Yugoslav crisis. Yugoslavia no longer held geopolitical importance for the West and was outside the focus of Western politics, which is evident from the statements of Western political leaders. The focus of Western politics was on events in the USSR, and during the critical phase of the Yugoslav crisis (1990-91), the world was preoccupied with the Gulf War. The international community feared a chaotic collapse of Yugoslavia that could serve as an example to the USSR, causing concern over control of nuclear weapons. In such circumstances, the West was less concerned with the details of the complicated relations within the Yugoslav federation and more interested in maintaining the status quo, i.e. keeping Yugoslavia together and maintaining geopolitical stability.

Until the second half of 1991, support for a unified Yugoslavia was almost completely dominant. As part of

this, American politics regarded Milošević as the “Balkan Gorbachev” and “catalyst of political and economic changes” and as someone who guaranteed the stability and unity of Yugoslavia. However, in the latter half of 1991, the war in Croatia entered its most intensive phase, and Western politics gradually changed its position and accepted the possibility of Yugoslavia’s dissolution and the creation of new states. There is no doubt that the images of war in the heart of Europe significantly influenced the breakdown of consensus on preserving Yugoslavia. The legal basis for the international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia was confirmed by the Opinions of the Badinter Commission on November 29 and January 11, which stated that Yugoslavia was in the process of dissolution and that the republic borders were state borders that could not be changed without the consent of the republics or by force.

The role of the international community during the breakup of Yugoslavia has been widely criticized. Although numerous international actors were involved, primarily the institutions of the European Community and the UN, the outcome was unsuccessful, and Yugoslavia

dissolved into wars that many thought were impossible in late 20th century Europe.

The role of the media in the breakup of Yugoslavia has been analyzed from various perspectives. In relatively numerous works, the propaganda activities of domestic media have been clearly shown, which followed national divisions and homogenizations. On the other hand, there are very few studies analyzing the narratives in foreign media, especially beyond descriptive overviews. The Western press was understandably influenced by the attitudes of their governments towards the conflicts in Yugoslavia. The complexity of the conflicts and the arguments used by warring parties to explain the causes of the conflict, coupled with strong propaganda, made the position of foreign journalists even more difficult. In addition, there were stereotypes about the entire Balkan region, best symbolized by Robert Kaplan and his explanation of conflict through “Ancient Ethnic Hatreds” or Misha Glenny’s book “The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War”.

Western media in the early stages of the conflict in Yugoslavia, particularly during the peak of the war in Croatia in the second half of 1991, were criticized for their role in taking a predominantly neutral position in which everyone was equally to blame. This article focuses on that period. The analysis of the narratives of selected American (US) and British (UK) newspapers will show the attitudes towards the war in Croatia during the peak of the conflict from September 1991 to January 1992. In the following part of the article, we first provide an interpretation of the conflict in Croatia through a presentation of the dominant official frames in Croatia and Serbia. These basic interpretive frameworks will be used to code newspaper articles related to the war in Croatia. After that, we explain the research methodology and sample selection, as well as the theoretical background. In the next part of the paper, we will present the results of our research and discuss the main findings. In the conclusion, we will contextualize and summarize the research results.

Framing the war in Croatia and Serbia

The Yugoslav crisis ultimately resulted in bloody wars in the first half of the 1990s. Different conceptions of the organization of Yugoslavia ultimately resulted in the disintegration of the state. Croatia declared independence based on a referendum, while simultaneously, the Serbian rebellion in Croatia, which started a year earlier and was supported by Belgrade, escalated into a full-scale war in Croatia.

In this section, we will outline the main frames used to explain the war in Croatia from the Croatian and Serbian sides. We will focus on the official general interpretations of the war from political institutions and leaders from Croatia and Serbia (and rebel Serbs in Croatia).

Croatia

The Croatian Democratic Union, led by Franjo Tuđman, won the first multi-party election in the spring

of 1990 based on a clear national policy and the sovereignty of the republic, while clearly opposing Milošević’s policy of centralization. The inability to agree on the confederation of Yugoslavia at the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991 increased inter-republic and inter-ethnic tensions, while strengthening nationalism. From the beginning of Serbian claims about the endangerment of Serbs in Croatia in 1989, the Croatian political leadership denied such claims and regarded them as an attempt to destabilize Croatia in order to accept the Serbian vision of the reorganization of Yugoslavia. Later, the rebellion of Serbs and the war in Croatia were assessed as terrorism aimed at overthrowing democratic rule, accepting the preservation of a centralized Yugoslavia or Greater Serbian aggression, i.e., the creation of Greater Serbia. From the Croatian perspective, it was not a civil war, but rather Serbian aggression against Croatia, with the help of the JNA (Yugoslav People’s Army), which turned into the Serbian army and local rebellious Serbs, aimed at overthrowing Croatian authorities and/or changing borders. For Croatia, the republic’s borders were state borders, and sovereignty belonged to the Croatian people, with the right to self-determination belonging to the republics. In the second half of 1991, the height of the war, the Croatian leadership considers Croatia an independent state, in the full sense, starting from October when the decision to break off relations with other Yugoslav republics from June came into effect. Planned crimes against the Serbian population are denied, and crimes committed by the Serbian side are emphasized.

Serbia

With the rise of Slobodan Milošević to power in Serbia in 1987, the process of spreading of Serbian nationalism in politics began. The main argument of Serbian nationalism was based on the victimization of the Serbian nation. In the well-known SANU Memorandum from 1986, Serbs were declared the main victims of socialist Yugoslavia. Accordingly, Serbs in Croatia were endangered in various ways, from the suppression of language, institutions, and assimilation. With the arrival of the HDZ in power, the Croatian leadership is compared to the fascist NDH from World War II. Within this framework, the Serbian rebellion was assessed as a response to the threat of Croatian nationalism and the prevention of the repetition of crimes against Serbs from World War II. According to Serbian interpretation, the Croatian authorities were nationalist and separatist and wanted to break up Yugoslavia illegally. If Yugoslavia broke up, the republican borders were not state borders, but administrative ones, and new borders needed to be negotiated. Furthermore, Serbs in Croatia had the right to self-determination, i.e., to remain in Yugoslavia, which was also justified by the fact that Serbs were a constituent people in Croatia. Serbia did not participate in the war in Croatia; it was a civil war in which Serbs fought for their rights and the protection of their lives against Croatian nationalists or neo-Ustashes. In this context, Croatian crimes against Serbs were high-

lighted, and Serbian crimes were denied. The JNA was the Yugoslav army that legally operated in Croatia to protect the population and preserve Yugoslavia.

Theoretical Background

The theory of media framing and framing in general has a long history among scholars of psychology, sociology, communication theory, linguistic anthropology, political sciences, and others. Its concepts and types have been explored for more than 50 years. In this theoretical approach, we will focus solely on the theory that covers framing and narrative when discussing a certain topic. In this case, the conflict between Croatia and Serbia. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of how the media portrays the conflict, how different narratives can influence public opinion, and how framing can shape our understanding of the events taking place. By focusing on framing and narrative, we can better analyze the role of the media in shaping our perceptions of the conflict and the broader implications of media in shaping public discourse.

Framing, as a concept, was first introduced in 1972 by George Baetson. Baetson defined frames as “spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages” based on psychological standard. Framing, in this regard, describes how stories and news are shaped by familiar contexts to make them more recognizable or familiar to the audience.

Two years later, in 1974, Edward Goffman, a sociologist and communication theorist, proposed a conceptual framework for understanding how media framing operates. According to Goffman, media framing refers to how the media presents information in ways that can influence how audiences perceive certain issues. Goffman argued that the media employs various techniques to frame the information, such as highlighting certain aspects of a story while downplaying others, using specific language to describe events or people, and selecting particular visuals or images to convey a particular message. Furthermore, he also introduced the idea of „keying“ which refers to the use of different frames for different audiences by using language, images, and arguments that appeal to consumers beliefs and values. In short, Goffman emphasized the role of the media in shaping our perception of the world and argued that media framing can have significant consequences for public opinion, social norms, and political outcomes.

Another key researcher in media framing is Robert M. Entman, who made a significant contribution to the media framing theory in 1991 by arguing that framing can only be observed through the narrative it follows. Entman proposed that framing cannot be easily identified by words and symbols alone, and that the broader context must also be taken into account. He introduced the idea that narratives of stories must first be compared to identify how news frames their stories. In his paper “Framing US Cov-

erage of International News: Contrast in Narratives of KAL and Iran Air Incidents,” Entman identified five key ways in which news frame their stories: conflict, human interest, consequence, morality, and responsibility. In summary, narrative frames are a way of organizing and interpreting information based on a particular storyline or theme. They provide a structure for understanding complex issues or events and help to make sense of the world around us. Given that this research paper addresses a conflict between two countries, our analysis will primarily focus on the “conflict frame.”

When reporting on a war, conflict frame is often used by journalists to frame the events as a struggle between two opposing sides. The conflict frame tends to emphasize the tension and disagreements between the groups involved in the war, and it often portrays the events as a battle between good and evil, or as a struggle between competing interests. The use of the conflict frame in war reporting can have significant implications for public opinion and decision-making. For example, if the media consistently portrays one side as the aggressor and the other side as the victim, it can shape public perceptions and reinforce stereotypes and biases.

Camilla Bjarnøe wrote about how citizens may gain knowledge when exposed to the conflict frame, which can consequently lead to more participation in political discussions. As such, conflict theory can entice people to think about subjects they previously knew little or nothing about. When reporting about a war, journalists can use the conflict frame to frame events in a manner they see fit. The conflict frame tends to emphasize the tension and disagreements between the groups involved in the war, often portraying events as a struggle between good and evil or as a competition between conflicting interests. Simply put, the conflict frame is a technique used by journalists and reporters to create a compelling narrative that captures the attention of their audience.

Material and Methods

For our research on media framing of the war in Croatia, we have chosen to use a quantitative approach. Our focus is on the period between September 1991, when the attack in Croatia intensified, and January 1992 when Croatia was starting to be recognized as an independent country by the international community. We wanted to select a total of four newspapers, two from the United States of America (USA) and two from the United Kingdom (UK), due to the relevance of these two countries in the process of mediation between Croatia and Serbia during the war.

In order to eliminate any potential bias in the selection process, the authors utilized a random selection method from lists of the top circulated newspapers, from the early 1990s, in both UK and USA. As a result, the Guardian and the Independent were chosen from the British daily newspapers, while the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times were selected from the American newspapers.

Our analysis was based on two parts. Firstly, we wanted to see the types of text and their frequency in the said newspapers during these 5 months. Secondly, we wanted to gain an understanding of the narrative frames present in these newspapers. We analyzed the narrative stances regarding the conflict, covering all textual content. Our study analyzed a total of 920 texts, with 307 from the *Guardian*, 289 from the *Independent*, 200 from the *New York Times*, and 124 from the *Los Angeles Times*.

For this research paper, we have selected all types of written content from newspapers that mention or relate to Croatia, Serbia and Yugoslavia. The textual content has been carefully segmented into three distinct categories:

1. Journalistic writing, which encompasses a wide range of content including news reports, commentary, opinions, and more.
2. Articles from various news agencies, such as AFP, Reuters, and AP
3. Letters from readers, which represent the reactions of the public to the war reporting in these newspapers.

Our second part of the research focused on narrative exploration in selected newspapers. We conducted a narrative analysis on a variety of texts, including news articles, reports, agency articles, and letters. Our rationale for selecting this range of texts is based on the understanding that a newspaper editor's decision to include certain types of texts can contribute to the narrative construction of a conflict and its reasons. Therefore, we argue that analyzing these various types of texts is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative framing of the conflict in these newspapers. Given the different reporting styles and expressions of opinions from readers in American and British newspapers, we selected the following arguments for our narrative attribution.

Pro-Croatian narrative was attributed to a text if it:

- Depicts the Croatian cause as one for independence and sovereignty
- Depicts Croatian forces as defenders of their country
- Depicts Croatia as a democratic state trying to wrestle from communist Yugoslavia
- Depicts Yugoslav army and Serbian forces as aggressors
- The republic borders are state borders and they constitute the right to self-determination
- The war is defined as a Serbian aggression

Pro-Serbian narrative was attributed to a text if it:

- Depicts the cause of the war as keeping Yugoslavia together against separatists and insurgents
- Follows Serbian reasoning for war as protection of Serbs in Croatia
- Depicts Croatian forces as ultranationalists and/or Ustashe (former Nazi ally in World War II)
- Yugoslav army is not invading, they are protecting and keeping peace

- If Yugoslavia were to dissolve, the borders of the republics would become administrative borders, and the right to self-determination would belong to the respective peoples
- The war is defined as a civil war

If a text did not meet either of these criteria, it was classified as having a neutral narrative. For instance, if a text solely focuses on the state of the fighting by describing the location, timing, and participants of a battle without including any comments on the morality of the conflict or individual soldiers' actions. Furthermore, if a text exhibited elements of both pro-Croatian and pro-Serbian narratives it was coded as neutral.

Now that we understand the criteria for narrative attribution, we can explore examples of journalistic articles that exhibit a pro-Croatian narrative or a pro-Serbian narrative.

Examples of texts with a pro-Croatian narrative:

"... Serbians' view of themselves, Dr Bogdanovic regrets, is based on mythology and history. "But this is not the real history or mythology. It is 'pop', as in pop music. One reason is that for 40 years we did not learn true history. We were cut off from our own traditions," he says. In what Dr Bogdanovic dismisses sadly as "an empire of dreams", dictatorship is a greater danger than external attack. He blames the republic's president, Slobodan Milosevic, for starting the war, and for persistently misrepresenting it, to retain and expand his own power. "The whole situation was produced by lies. We in Serbia live in a civilisation of lies... In general we cannot deny that Croatia has been attacked. It is not only a case of defending Serbian villages. We are going far beyond that," he says. This is close to political heresy in the fragile democracy of Serbia."^a

„...There could be nothing more barbarous than to subject women, children, old men to these ceaseless bombardments; all over a border quarrel that should be, and could be, sorted out through sensible arbitration at The Hague or wherever. The Serbs, lacking a suitable port of their own, want Dubrovnik, regardless of the wish of its inhabitants. They are therefore wrecking the place... In Yugoslavia we are dealing with events that at other times have been judged to be war crimes. Whatever the merits of the Serbian case, it should not be argued by the bombing of babies and old women. The annexation by force of towns, the inhabitants of which do not wish to be annexed, counts in the world's book as imperialism, condemned by the UN”.^b

^aBROWN D, Serbian schizophrenia, *The Guardian* (23th of November, 1991).

^bSTONE N, Dubrovnik: the case for a war crime trial, *The Guardian* (13 November, 1991).

Examples of texts with a pro-Serbian narrative:

“..Instead the idiot catch phrase, „Greater Serbia bad thing“ was passed onto the media. But suppose they talk, in lower case, about a large Serbia, not an imperial grand design, but the accession of certain pockets, followed by careful, and perhaps financially aided, voluntary shifts of population – Serbs going from areas where their minority was smaller into agreed pockets in a swap with Croats moving out of them. It would have been troublesome and laborious and would have affronted the men now gathered under the chequered flag hoisted by Pavelic in 1941. But, to make a final numerical comparison, it would have been a thousand times better than war.“

„...In the end the greater strength of Serbia did tell. Vukovar surrendered, and the writing is on the wall, unless the fighting by is stopped, for Osijek as well. This is what the Croats refused from the beginning to understand that they could not walked out of Yugoslavia with all the territory he and people they held under an earlier and different dispensation without starting a war, and a war which, because of the disparity of force between Croatia and Serbia, they could not win..“

Example of texts with a neutral narrative:

“Officials of the European Community arrived in Belgrade today to advance a peace plan accepted by Croatia and Serbia that calls for teams of foreign observers to monitor a cease-fire...Though there are serious doubts over whether the case-fire will hold long enough to allow another phase of European-sponsored peace talks, there is also hope that the fragile pact might offer a brief respite from, or at least a decrease in, the violence”.

“HELPFUL talks between Croatian and federal representatives were reported by officials yesterday in their efforts to strengthen truce in Croatia, but tensions persisted over the mixed ethnic region of Bosnia-Herzegovina...The Yugoslav peace process took a further step yesterday with the agreement by both Croatia and Serbia to open military representative offices in the other’s capital, Hungarian radio reported...“

Results and Discussion

In this section, we will present the results of the research study, analyzing the texts from all four selected newspapers on a monthly basis. These results reveal how the media coverage of the topic evolved over time and how their reporting differed from one another.

Text types

According to our analysis, the Guardian (Figure 1) had the highest number of written journalistic articles, while letters were prominently featured in November (covering

attacks on Dubrovnik and Vukovar) and January (related to the international community’s recognition of Croatia). News reports from agencies were of a negligible number. Furthermore, it can be inferred that the Guardian followed the basic news cycle principle following the war, as it reported the most in September, when the attacks intensified, rather than during the period of heaviest casualties and losses suffered by Croatia in October and November. There is also a significant drop of texts in December and January.

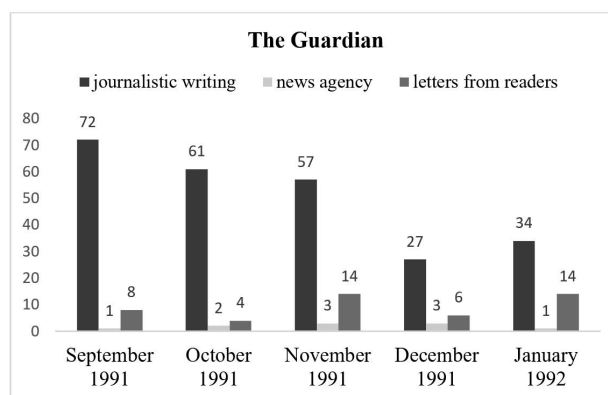


Fig.1. Types of textual content in the Guardian.

Similar to the Guardian, the Independent (Figure 2) published a large number of journalistic articles over a selected period. However, there were some notable differences between the two publications. In particular, the Independent had a higher number of articles in November, with a focus on the events in Dubrovnik and Vukovar. Additionally, the Independent had a lower proportion of news that originated from agencies, and the number of letters it published decreased over the selected period.

Both the Guardian and the Independent followed a similar pattern of dispersion between journalistic articles, news from agencies, and letters from readers. This suggests that there were no significant differences in how the two publications presented and prioritized these types of content during the selected period.

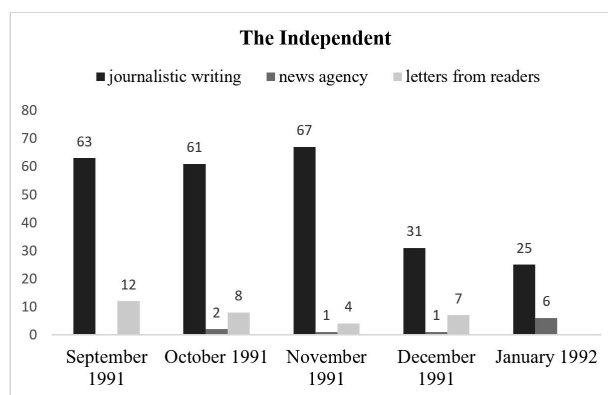


Fig. 2. Types of textual content in the Independent.

Unlike the Guardian or the Independent, the New York Times (Figure 3) did not experience a significant drop in journalistic articles as the months went by. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the New York Times had a lower number of articles, almost half of what the British newspapers had during the first 3 months. In addition, its usage of news from agencies was also minimal, while the letters from readers were consistent throughout the selected period.

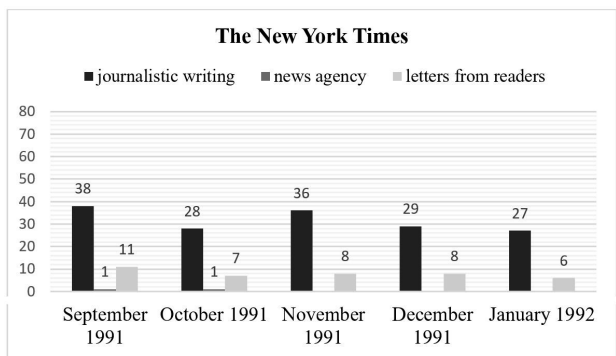


Fig. 3. Types of textual content in the New York Times.

Finally, the Los Angeles Times (Figure 4) had the lowest number of journalistic articles during the research period, compared to all the other papers that we analyzed. Additionally, the publication did not feature any letters from readers, except for September. Notably, in January 1992, textual content dropped significantly, and news from agencies even overtook journalistic articles.

The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times had a significantly lower number of articles compared to the Guardian and the Independent. From a quantitative perspective, it can be said that the British newspapers covered and followed the war more closely than the the American press.

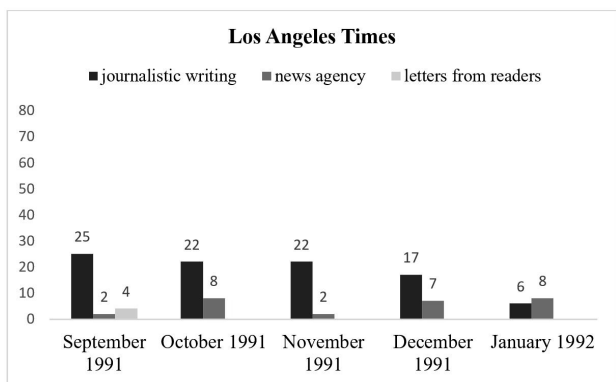


Fig.4. Types of textual content in the Los Angeles Time.

Narrative frames

In September (Figure 5), all of the selected newspapers had the most texts with neutral narrative, pro-Serbian narrative was most prominent in the Guardian, but the paper also had a higher number of pro-Croatian narrative

texts. the Independent had the most texts with a pro-Croatian narrative among the selected newspapers. Interestingly, the Los Angeles Times had the most neutral narrative stance on the conflict, according to a percentage-wise analysis.

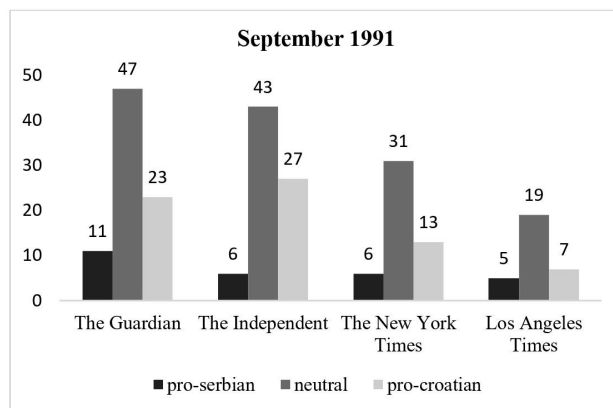


Fig. 5. Narrative analysis in selected newspapers texts – September 1991.

In October, the newspaper the Independent emerged as the leading proponent of the pro-Croatian narrative among the selected publications (Figure 6). This shift was catalyzed by the attack on Dubrovnik and Phil Davidson’s reporting from the besieged city, which played a pivotal role in shaping the pro-Croatian narrative. Similarly, the Guardian and the New York Times also displayed a notable tilt towards the pro-Croatian narrative, albeit to a lesser degree than the Independent. In comparison to the text volume published in September, the New York Times exhibited a noteworthy decrease, by half, in the amount of the textual content it contained. In contrast to the other three newspapers, the Los Angeles Times maintained a steadfastly neutral narrative throughout the period under scrutiny, adopting a balanced approach towards pro-Serbian and pro-Croatian narratives.

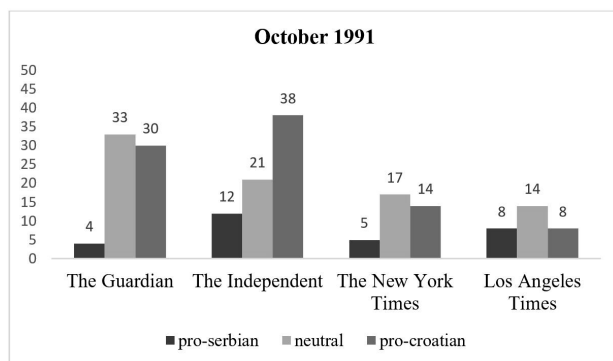


Fig. 6. Narrative analysis in selected newspapers texts – October 1991

In November, Croatia experienced the most intense fighting of the conflict. Dubrovnik was besieged, and Vukovar fell within the second half of the month. Despite the gravity of the situation, all four newspapers examined in

the study maintained a mostly neutral narrative (Figure 7), albeit with a significant emphasis on the pro-Croatian viewpoint. In addition, it is noteworthy that the New York Times exhibited an increase in the overall text volume, compared to the previous month of October, maintaining a similar number of texts as it had in September. Additionally, while most newspapers demonstrated a significant decline in the amount of text featuring a pro-Serbian narrative, the Guardian newspaper exhibited an increase in the amount of text presenting the pro-Serbian viewpoint, as compared to the preceding month of October.

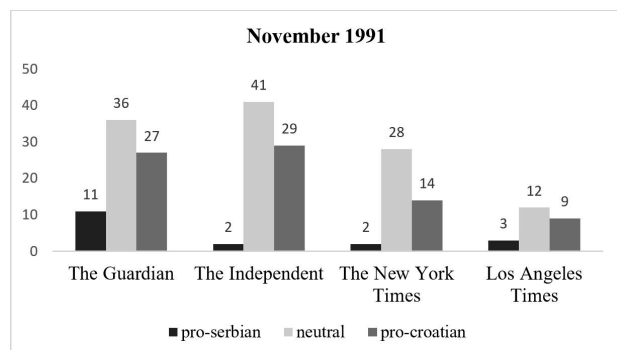


Fig. 7. Narrative analysis in selected newspapers texts – November 1991

During December (Figure 8), there was a significant decrease in the number of texts published by the Guardian and the Independent compared to November. Despite this, the Independent continued to promote the pro-Croatian narrative while the Guardian remained mostly neutral in its coverage. However, the Guardian included texts that presented both pro-Serbian and pro-Croatian perspectives, aiming to maintain a balanced approach. In December, the Guardian had the most pro-Serbian articles of all the selected newspapers. When it comes to the newspapers in the US, although the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times only experienced a slight decline in the number of published texts, they shifted their narrative towards a pro-Croatian perspective. Notably, there were no texts that presented a pro-Serbian narrative in either publication.

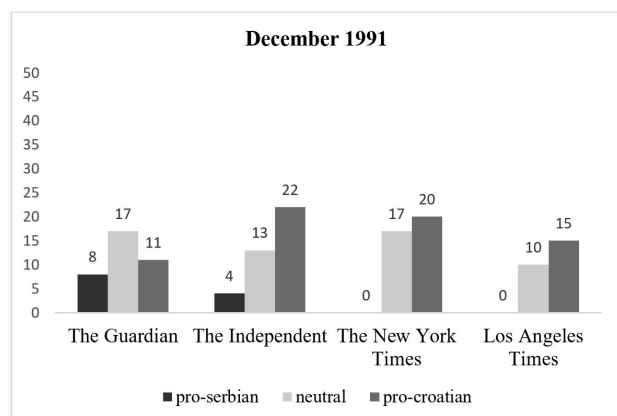


Fig. 8. Narrative analysis in selected newspapers texts – December 1991

At the start of 1992, in January (Figure 9), the Guardian remained consistent with the number of texts presenting a pro-Serbian narrative compared to November. However, they also shifted to mostly promoting a pro-Croatian perspective. In contrast, the Independent had a close call in terms of the number of texts, with both neutral and pro-Croatian stances featuring almost equally. Notably, no texts with a pro-Serbian narrative were presented in their coverage. On the other hand, the New York Times saw an increase in the number of texts presenting a pro-Serbian stance from the previous month, going from zero to five. In contrast, there was a decline by half in the number of pro-Croatian narrative texts, giving way to more neutral coverage. Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times maintained a mostly neutral stance in its coverage, featuring only a few texts presenting a pro-Croatian perspective and no texts presenting a pro-Serbian narrative.

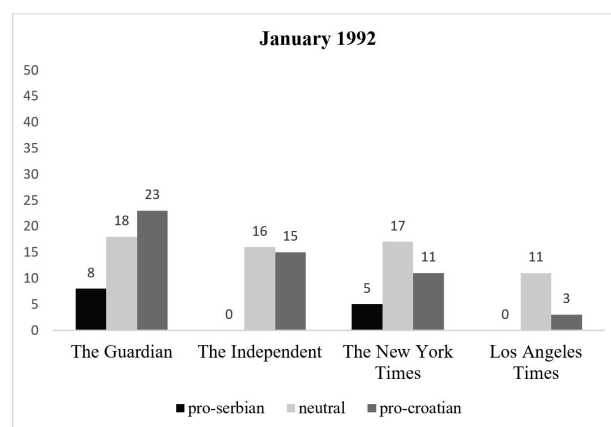


Fig. 9. Narrative analysis in selected newspapers texts – January 1992.

Conclusions

The Western policy towards the Yugoslav crisis can be divided into different stages. In the first period from 1989-91, the dominant position was one of geopolitical stability, which meant maintaining the status quo and preserving a united Yugoslavia. In the second half of 1991, as the war in Croatia intensified, there was a gradual change characterized by disunity and different strategies for resolving the crisis, including the breakup of Yugoslavia. Within the European community, there were different approaches. On one side, there was a group led by Germany that increasingly leaned towards supporting, and later recognizing, Slovenia and Croatia, while on the other side, the UK and France still advocated for the preservation of Yugoslavia. The United States largely left the main role to Europe in the Yugoslav crisis and had an official position similar to that of the UK and France - containing the crisis and preserving Yugoslavia. British politics and diplomacy were much more involved in European Community and generally European politics.

This research also reveals a lesser involvement of the United States, as seen in the significantly fewer articles

about the war in Croatia in the American newspapers compared to the British ones. Additionally, the research shows a large number of neutral articles that align with the unclear and divided policies of the West.

Finally, the analysis reveals a noticeable shift towards a pro-Croatian narrative in the selected newspapers over time, particularly as the conflict became more visible. This trend was consistent with the official policy of the West and culminated in the recognition of states, with Croatia and Slovenia being the first to be recognized. The Guardian maintained a mostly neutral stance throughout the analysis period, despite having most of the pro-Serbian narrative texts in regards to the other newspapers. Furthermore, during the 5-month study, the pro-Croatian narrative in the Guardian increased, with the newspaper publishing the most pro-Croatian texts in January 1992 out of all the selected newspapers. The Independent, on the other hand, had the highest number of texts with a pro-Croatian narrative, with an almost equal number of neutral texts. Notably, The Independent had very few to no texts with a pro-Serbian narrative. In terms of press

coverage, it was observed that the American press had significantly fewer texts compared to their British counterparts. Both the British and American newspapers released daily issues. The New York Times had the highest number of texts with a pro-Croatian narrative, while the Los Angeles Times started with a mostly neutral stance but shifted towards a pro-Croatian stance after reporting on the attack on Dubrovnik. However, after the attack became well known, The Los Angeles Times shifted back to a mostly neutral stance, just like at the start of the war. Regarding the journalistic articles, we found numerous examples of pro-Croatian, pro-Serbian, and neutral narratives. In contrast, all articles sourced from news agencies maintained a neutral stance about the war. These articles refrained from taking sides or emphasizing any specific narrative bias, and did not meet the criteria established for the coding of narrative bias for either side. On the other hand, all the letters from readers in the selected newspapers were either pro-Serbian or pro-Croatian, with no neutral stances whatsoever.

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ZAPADNO NOVINSTVO I RAT U HRVATSKOJ

SAŽETAK

U vrijeme raspada Jugoslavije i početka rata u Hrvatskoj 1991. godine, Balkan nije bio u fokusu zapadne politike koja se prije svega bavila kolapsom SSSR-a i Zaljevskim ratom. U ranom razdoblju dominantna pozicija zapadne politike bila je očuvanje Jugoslavije i održavanje geopolitičke stabilnosti. U drugoj polovici 1991. godine, pod utjecajem rata u Hrvatskoj, zapadna politika polako se okreće prema mogućnosti raspada Jugoslavije i priznanju neovisnosti Slovenije i Hrvatske. Članak analizira američke i britanske novinske narative o ratu u Hrvatskoj tijekom petomjesečnog vrhunca sukoba, od rujna 1991. do siječnja 1992. Analiza je provedena na četiri dnevna lista, dva američka (*The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*) i dva britanska (*The Independent*, *The Guardian*). Ukupno je analizirano 920 tekstova kroz kodiranje temeljeno na usvajanju prohrvatske, prosrpske ili neutralne pozicije. Istraživanje pokazuje da je u analiziranim britanskim novinama objavljeno više tekstova o ratu u Hrvatskoj. Drugo, narativ je značajno obilježen neutralnim pozicijama, što se poklapa s nejasnom, nedorečenom i podijeljenom politikom Zapada prema jugoslavenskoj krizi. Treće, u analiziranom razdoblju bilo je značajno više prohrvatskih nego prosrpskih tekstova.

