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## Escalation- and deescalation-oriented aspects in the media construction of the Bosnia conflict

### Introduction

No shot had fallen yet, but when Croats and Serbs started to refer to each other as Tschetniks and Ustascha, people in former Yugoslavia knew, that they were at war. Still, the Yugoslavian civil wars did not - or at least not primarily - result from ethnic conflict, but rather from the process of transition to democracy (cf. Puhovski, 1996). There are several factors that must be taken into account:

*First:* The former Yugoslavian state was a multicultural and multiethnic society. All ethnic groups had the same rights, they were constitutive state people. Borders between Yugoslavian states were not ethnical borders.

*Second:* The former Yugoslavian state was a totalitarian state, however, based on communist ideology according to which all legitimate interests were common interests of all Yugoslavian people. And there was a tabu on ethnicity.

*Third:* Democracy needs parties who represent interest groups. Since the Serbian élite (in particular Milosevic and his clique) aimed at both, maintaining the Yugoslavian state and maintaining it as a socialist state (under Serbian leadership), however, only interests common to all Yugoslavian people were legitimate to them. Therefore, interest groups could only be formed in opposition to the Serbian élite, and as Milosevic was identified with those he claimed to represent, oppositional interest groups formed themselves in opposition to "the Serbs" as national or ethnic groups. As a result, the process of transition from totalitarian to democratic society ran into ethnic antagonism long before a democratic culture could be established.

*Fourth:* The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was extremely complex and involved a multitude of actors:

- A. Internal (Yugoslavian) actors: power-hungry élites (Serbian, Croat and Muslim); indoctrinated normal people, especially members of minorities, who feared to loose their rights (Serbian, Croat and Muslim); as well as normal people, who did *not* want to fight their neighbours, who might have been the real chance for transition to democracy in former Yugoslavia; people, who did not belong to just one ethnic group, who were the real victims of the Bosnia war, but got little attention by the media (and if they did: as refugees only), etc.
- B. International actors: The Austrian, German and EU diplomacy, supporting the independence of the Yugoslavian republics. The UN Secretary in General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who had warned the German minister of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, of the explosive consequences that a premature recognition of the independence of some of the Yugoslavian republics would bring about (cf. Nilsen, 1994). The UN peace-keeping mission. Mediating third parties (UN, EU, OSZE etc.). NGOs that tried to give humanitarian help and to contribute to reconciliation (who also got little media attention). And, finally, the UN/NATO peace-enforcement mission.

*Fifth:* Ethnic antagonism revitalised historical conflict, prejudice and enmification that had survived under the surface. Also the international community had different historical affinities to the conflicting parties, and in the early stages of the conflict, the stance of the European states was quite divided. In Austria and Germany, the enemy image of the Serbs could build upon historical traditions reaching back until World War I and before. Taking the U.S. and the EU partners (particularly France and England) into consideration, however, open support of the Croat side was inconceivable.

On the other hand, the EU members and the U.S. were united by common political and economic interests which were affected by the dissolution of the former Yugoslavian state, and it is not surprising, if they had sympathy rather for those groups in former Yugoslavia who were ready to join the western democracies and to open their economy for the free market. Thus, the Serbs had poor cards from the very beginning.

In the end, international public opinion, identified the Serbs as *Fascists* and called for a military clearance in order to prevent humanitarian disaster and to release the people in the war zone - in particular the Bosnian Muslims - from the atrocities they endured.

Among the factors which contributed to this consensus, there is not only the high share which the Serbs had in the atrocities that were committed by all sides during the war (cf. Greve, 1995). The exploitation of the atrocities, both by PR agencies and by journalists drawing inspiration from *Journalism of Attachment* (cf. Luostarinen & Kempf, 1999) also played a role.

A prominent example is Ruder & Finn, who were awarded with a silver medal in crisis communication for their Bosnia engagement by the *Public Relations Society of America*. According to James Harff, who was in charge of the operation, the most difficult part was to win support by the Jewish circles (cf. ID-Dokumentation, 1994; Beham, 1996):

- In his book "Wastelands of Historical Reality", the Croat president Tudjman had made statements that could easily be interpreted as antisemitic, and
- in his book "The Islamic Declaration", the Bosnian president Izetbegovic had openly voted for a fundamentalist Islamic state.

Moreover, the history of Croatia and Bosnia was marked by brutal antisemitism and several ten thousands of Jews had been killed in Croat camps during World War II. Accordingly, there were all prerequisites for Jewish intellectuals and organisations to have hostile attitudes towards Croats and Bosnians.

The task of the operation was to reverse this situation, and Ruder & Finn managed to do so. After *New York Newsday*, had reported about Serbian concentration camps in August, 1992, they persuaded three Jewish organizations to publish a statement in *New York Times* and to organize a protest demonstration at the seat of the United Nations. Thus bringing the Jews into play on side of the Bosnians, was a great bluff. At one single blow, it put the Serbs on the same level with the Nazis in public opinion.

When, finally, the British TV-journalist Penny Marshal presented her price-winning videotapes from the Serbian camp in Trnopolje - men with naked chest behind warbed wire - this judgement about the Serbs was accepted by public opinion as

matter of fact - not because Milosevic was compared with Hitler as was Sada Hussein during the Gulf War, but because the audience believed to have eyewitnessed itself, whatever it needed in order to come to this judgement. When Thomas Deichmann (1997) unveiled that the videotapes were faked - they didn't show men behind a fence, but were filmed from within a neighbouring site that was surrounded by barbed wire - the Austrian journalist Erica Fischer (1997) attacked him with the words:

"Why does he do so? After all, the photo shook up the world. (...) Did Penny Marsh al claim that she stood outside? I don't know, and basicly I don't mind".

And Mick Hume, the editor of the small left-wing *LM magazine*, was sued for liability by the British television channel *ITN*, because had reprinted Deichmann's article.

## Method

There can be little doubt that PR-agencies and Journalism of Attachement executed strong influence on the formation of public opinion during the war in Bosnia-Herzegowina. They set the mood and there is the danger, that this mood had an impact on all of the Bosnia coverage and jeopardized both, plurality and objectivity of the media. To examine, whether and to what extent this was the case is subject of the present study which analyses the content of the day-to-day coverage of the Bosnian war in the prestige press from Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, the United States, Great Britain, Israel and France. In each of these countries (except Germany) one conservative quality paper was selected for analysis. In Germany, the whole range of quality papers covering the complete political spectrum from the post-communist *Neues Deutschland* to the right wing *Die Welt* were included in the study (cf. Table 1).

Country	Paper	n
Finland (FIN)	Helsingin Sanomat	78
Switzerland (CH)	Neue Züricher Zeitung	94
Austria (A)	Die Presse	84
Germany (D)	Neues Deutschland (ND)	93
	Frankfurter Rundschau (FR)	91
	Die Tageszeitung (taz)	84
	Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)	95
	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)	92
	Die Welt (Welt)	90
	United States (USA)	New York Times
Great Britain (GB)	The Times	85
Israel	Jerusalem Post	79
France (F)	Le Monde	75

Table 1: Papers included in the study.

From each of these newspapers, the major articles reporting on a total of 98 events organized in 16 timespots, dating from July 25, 1990 (declaration of autonomy of the

Serbian people in Croatia) until March 19, 1996 (reunification of Sarajevo), were analysed (cf. Table 2). Since not all of these events were reported in each of the analysed newspapers, the number of articles per newspaper ranges from 75 (*Le Monde*) to 95 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). The total number of articles in the analysis was 1132.<sup>1</sup>

Since most of the articles reported about several *conflict constellations* (cf. Table 3), it was not the articles themselves, but the conflict constellations which served as coding units for content analysis. Based on the events presented in the text, one or several conflict constellations could be identified per article. The total number of conflict constellations was 3651.

<b>Timespots (date of first and last event)</b>	
1.	The war in Croatia begins (7/25/90 - 5/2/91)
2.	Recognition of Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia (15/1/92 - 4/6/92)
3.	Peace demonstrations in Sarajewo and Belgrade (4/5/92 - 6/14/92)
4.	Grenade attack against Sarajewo, first UN sanctions (5/27/92 - 5/30/92)
5.	Maslenica-Offensive, Vance-Owen-Plan (1/22/93 - 5/15/93)
6.	Battle of Mostar, serbian-croatian plan to divide Bosnia into three parts (7/23/93 - 7/30/93)
7.	Croatian-Bosnian confederation, UN/NATO sanctions
8.	Peace plan of the Contact Group, Milosevic dissociates from Bosnian Serbs, Isolation of Bosnian Serbs (7/6/94 - 9/24/94)
9.	Bihaj, Coalition between Serbs and Abdic (10/31/94 - 11/19/94)
10.	Peace initiative by Jimmy Carter (12/17/94)
11.	Prolongation of the UN-mandate in Croatia (1/12/95 - 3/12/95)
12.	Sharpening of confrontation between Bosnian Serbs and UN/NATO (5/22/95 - 6/16/95)
13.	Krajina-Offensive (5/2/95 - 8/28/95)
14.	NATO attack on Bosnian Serbs, first deployment of German military (8/29/95 - 9/1/95)
15.	Dayton-agreement (9/8/95 - 14/12/95)
16.	Handing over of Sarajewo (1/10/96 - 3/19/96)

Table 2: Timespots analysed (based on a chronology by Meder & Reimann, 1996).

<b>Conflict constellation (who against whom):</b>	
*	A conflict constellation is always defined by a first and an (opposing) second party. At least one of the two parties includes an internal actor (Serb, Croat or Muslim).
*	There may also be a third party involved. Third party is always external actors (from the international community).
*	All parties may be composed of one or several actors.
*	Internal actors are always first or second parties.
*	External actors are considered third party in so far as they adopt a trans-party position and/or make efforts on behalf of a peaceful end to the dispute. Otherwise, they are first or second party.

Table 3: Definition of coding units

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed documentation of the sample, see Jaeger, Mattenschlager & Meder (1999).

The content analytical coding schedule was based on the escalation model by Kempf (1996) and resulted from simplification of the qualitative method by Kempf, Reimann & Luostarinen (1996).<sup>2</sup> Intercoder reliability was continuously monitored and sufficiently high (cf. Table 4).<sup>3</sup>

Statistical analysis of the data was carried out separately for the three ethnic groups of internal actors (Serbs, n=2022; Croats, n=884; and Muslims, n=1131), and for actors from the international community involved in the conflict either as external actors (first or second party, n=1050) or as neutral third party actors (n=1188).

Coefficient Kappa:	
* Min = 0.685	* Max = 0.932
* Range = 0.274	* Median = 0.836
* 1st Quartile = 0.761	* 3rd Quartil = 0.909
* Quartile difference = 0.148	

Table 4: Intercoder reliability.

### Internal actors

The results of the study showed that the international press was quite ambiguous about all three ethnic groups involved in the Bosnia conflict. So far, the negative image of the Serbs does not necessarily result from a biased coverage (as assumed by Serbian counterpropaganda; cf. Malesic, 1998), but it might simply be due to the fact that the Serbs fought against both, Croats and Muslims, and accordingly Serbian actors were covered by the media twice as often as each of the other groups (cf. Figure 1).

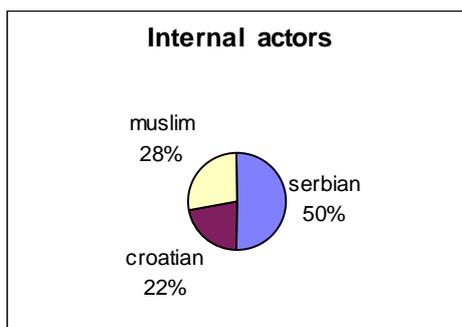


Figure 1: Involvement of internal actors in conflict constellations.

<sup>2</sup> The author wishes to thank Gerhard Meder and Michael Reimann for contributing to the construction of the coding schedule.

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to thank Caroline Chevat, Gerhard Meder, Andreas Mattenschlager and Risto Suikkanen for coding the voluminous data material.

Moreover, Serbian actors were more often involved in internal conflict (cf. Bosnian Serbs against the Serbian state), they were more often involved in conflict with external actors, and they found less support by actors from the international community (cf. Jaeger, Mattenschlager & Meder, 1999).

### *Conceptualisation of the conflict*

The depiction of all three ethnic groups (cf. Figure 2, Table 5) was dominated by the description of confrontative behavior like reports of military strikes, escalation, extortion, or intransigence. Cooperative behavior like willingness to negotiate, military withdrawal, deescalation an/or compliance were reported quite seldomly.

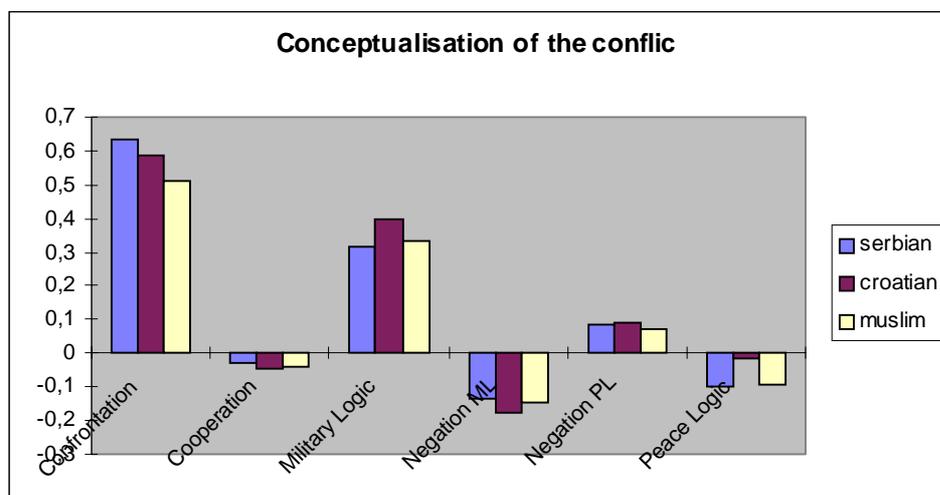


Figure 2: Internal actors: conceptualisation of the conflict (relative frequencies).

Conceptualisation of the conflict	serbian	croat	muslim	X <sup>2</sup> , df=2	sign.
Confrontative behavior	1278	522	579	43.2407	p<0.001
Cooperative behavior	67	40	43	2.5500	n.s.
conf:coop	1:0.05	1:0.08	1:0.07		
Military logic	639	354	379	19.7010	p<0.001
Negation of military logic	273	155	169	9.7696	p<0.01
ML:Negation ML	1:0.4	1:0.4	1:0.4		
Negation of peace logic	170	82	80	3.3703	n.s.
Peace logic	204	13	106	66.0815	p<0.001
Negation PL:PL	1:1.2	1:0.2	1:1.3		

Table 5: Internal actors: conceptualisation of the conflict (absolute frequencies).

All of them were depicted as constructing the conflict according to a win-lose model, thus following military logic by promotion of, agreement to or argumentation for the necessity, effectiveness, morality or appropriateness of confrontative behavior. Negation of military logic was also reported on all sides, but played a minor role

(ML:Negation = 1:0.4). Peace logic, promoting peaceful measures, deescalation or compliance was reported even less.

Still, there are differences between the three groups:

- While Serbian behavior is depicted as most confrontative, both, military logic and negation of military logic are the least reported on the Serbian side.
- Croats are portrayed as giving most emphasis to military logic (both, positively and negatively) and rejecting the logic of peace most decidedly (Negation:PL = 1:0.2).
- Muslim behavior is depicted as least confrontative.

### Evaluation of rights and intentions

The international press was also quite ambiguous about all three groups' rights and intentions (cf. Figure 3, Table 6). Denial of rights and/or imputation of "bad intentions" dominated the recognizance of rights or "good intentions" by a ratio of 1:0.7 (Serbs and Croats) up to 1:0.6 (Muslims).

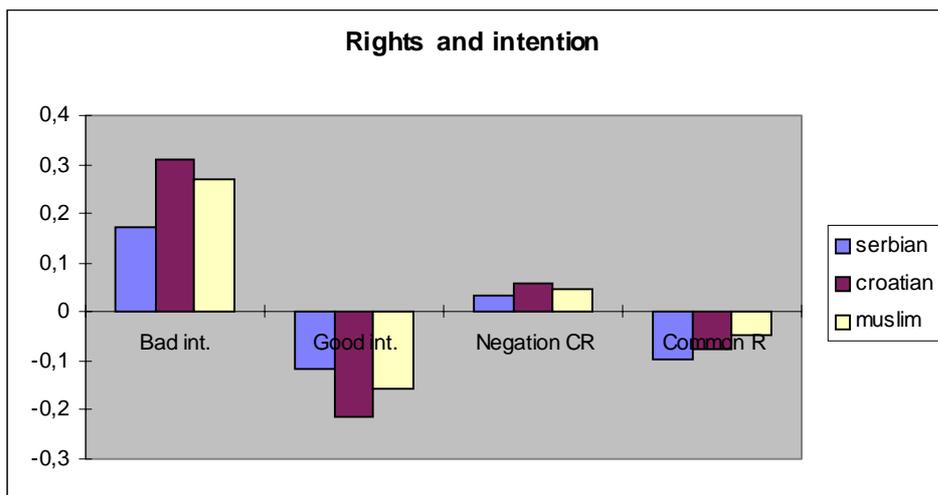


Figure 3: Internal actors: Evaluation of rights and intentions (relative frequencies)

Rights and intentions	serbian	croat	muslim	X <sup>2</sup> , df=2	sign.
Denial of rights and/or imputation of bad intentions	348	273	307	80.2776	p<0.001
Recognizance of rights or good intentions	239	188	178	43.7835	p<0.001
Bad I:Good I	1:0.7	1:0.7	1:0.6		
Denial of common rights or possibilities f. cooperation	67	53	50	11.1394	p<0.01
Common rights and/or possibilities for cooperation	194	66	54	23.6442	p<0.001
Negation CR:CR	1:2.9	1:1.2	1:1.1		

Table 6: Internal actors: Evaluation of rights and intentions (absolute frequencies)

- While Serbian rights and intentions found the least attention of the press (both, positively and negatively), the media put high emphasis on describing common rights and possibilities for cooperation of Serbs and their opponents, which they also denied less often than those of the other ethnic groups (Negation:CR = 1:2.9).
- Croat rights and intentions found the most attention (both, positively and negatively), and common rights and possibilities for cooperation of Croats and their opponents were denied most often (Negation:CR = 1.2).

The emphasis on military logic (both, positively and negatively) and the rejection of peace logic by the Croats, was thus supported by giving high priority to their rights and intentions and rejecting cooperative alternatives.

Serbian rights and intentions, whereas, were given little emphasis, and as possibilities for cooperation between Serbs and their opponents were accentuated, the confrontative Serbian behavior appeared to be unjustified even the more.

As a consequence, it was more or less unavoidable that the audience got the (right or wrong) impression that the Serbs were especially dangerous and evil: If the Serbs are permanently in the media, if (as with the other war parties too) this happens mostly in a negative context, and if we learn little about their intentions, it is only plausible to assume that it cannot be good intentions.

#### *Evaluation of actions*

Similarly, the international press put the least emphasis on explicit evaluation of Serbian actions (whether positive or negative), as well as on the common gain which Serbs and their opponents could get from putting an end to war. On the other hand, the press stimulated the least outrage about the opponents of the Serbs and presented the suffering of the Serbian side most often together with the suffering of

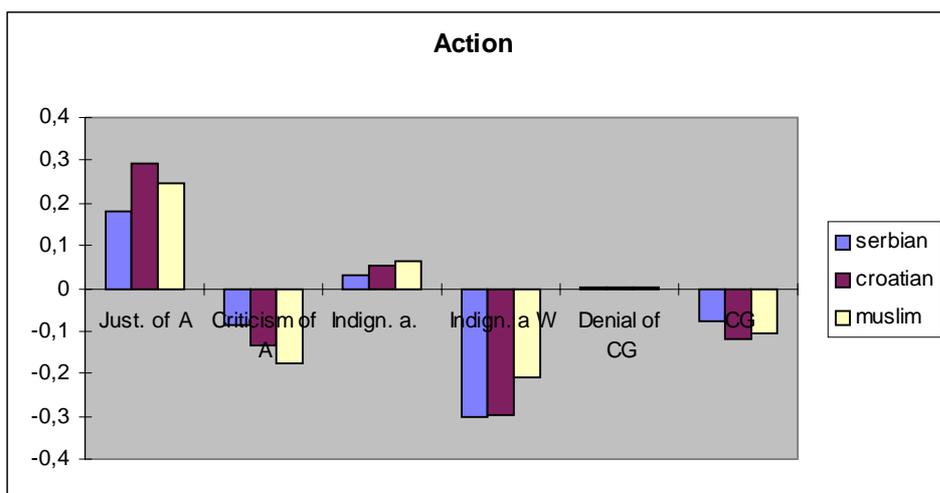


Figure 4: Internal actors: Evaluation of actions (relative frequencies).

Actions	serbian	croat	muslim	X <sup>2</sup> , df=2	sign.
Justification or unbiased evaluation	368	259	278	47.7894	p<0.001
Criticism or demonisation	178	117	199	53.2546	p<0.001
Justification: Criticism	1:0.5	1:0.5	1:0.7		
Indignation about the enem	63	48	69	17.6770	p<0.001
Indignation about the wa	613	264	235	36.1144	p<0.001
Indign.a E: Indign. a.W.	1:9.7	1:5.5	1:3.4		
Denial of Common gain from ending the war	4	2	2	0.0613	n.s.
Recognizance of common gain	156	106	118	15.1064	p<0.001
Denial of CG: CG	1:39	1:53	1:59		

Table 7: Internal actors: Evaluation of actions (absolute frequencies).

the opponent, thus inducing indignation about the war rather than about the enemies of the Serbs (Indign a.E.:Indign. a.W = 1:9.7) (cf. Figure 4, Table 7).

While indignation about the war, was nearly as high in the context of the coverage of Croat actions, there was rather high indignation about the enemies of the Croats also (Indign. a.E.:Indign. a.W. = 1:5). And - due to the need for cooperation between Croats and Muslims - the possible common gain from putting an end to the conflict was stressed most often in the context of Croat actions, which - at the same time - were justified more often than those of the other ethnic groups.

Although Muslim actions were most often criticised or demonised, the press directed the indignation about war most often against the enemies of the Muslims (Indignation a.E.:Indignation a.W. = 1:3.4).

#### *Interpunctuation of the conflict*

While both, Serbs (Defense:Attack = 1:2.7) and Croats (Defense:Attack = 1: 2.9) were rather portrayed as aggressors, the Muslims were depicted less often in a position of attack and more often in a defensive position (Defense:Attack = 1:1.5) than Serbs and Croats. While Serbs were portrayed as least defensive, the Croat appeared as most attacking (cf. Figure 5, Table 8).

While emphasis on strength and confidence to win the war was stressed by the media on all sides, the price which the parties would have to pay for military victory found only little attention. Distress, mistrust against the opponent and their reduction were no prominent topics of coverage either.

Nonetheless, the media tended to support the cooperation between Croats and Muslims by giving more attention to the price of military victory and to the reduction of mistrust between the parties than in the Serbian case. Moreover, they put more emphasis on the distress executed on Croats and Muslims by their opponent's dangerousness and thus disqualified the Serbs even the more.

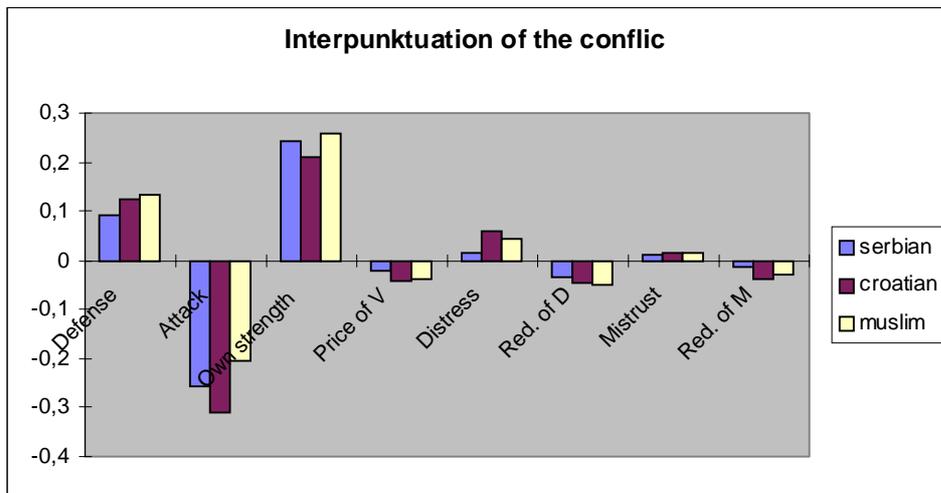


Figure 5: Internal actors: Interpunktuation of the conflict (relative frequencies).

Interpunktuation of the conflict	serbian	croat	muslim	X <sup>2</sup> , df=2	sign.
Defense	190	109	153	13.9134	p<0.001
Attack	520	311	231	30.0753	p<0.001
Defense:Attack	1:2.7	1:2.9	1:1.5		
Emphasis on own strength	495	185	293	7.04	n.s.
Price of military victory	40	35	43	12.7852	p<0.01
Own strength:Price of V	1:0.08	1:0.19	1:0.15		
Distress	30	51	48	42.1043	p<0.001
Reduction of Distress	67	41	55	7.1875	n.s.
Distress: Reduction of D	1:2.2	1:0.8	1:1.1		
Mistrust against the opponent	20	14	19	3.3124	n.s.
Reduction of mistrust	28	34	32	18.1188	p<0.001
Mistrust: Reduction of M	1:1.4	1:2.4	1:1.7		

Table 8: Internal actors: Interpunktuation of the conflict (absolute frequencies).

The unequal interpunktuation of the conflict becomes more evident, if we look at the latent styles of coverage which are blended in the frequency distributions in Figure 5.

In most cases, the press put little emphasis on the interpunktuation of the conflict. Especially the coverage of the Serbian party followed this main tenor of interpunktuation (74% of all reports on Serbian actors), which - though with little frequency - depicted them as aggressors. The same holds for the Croats (in 69% of the reports about Croat actors). The main tenor of portraying Muslim actors (69%), on the other hand, put them less clearly in an attacking position, rather stressed their strength and thus tended to support confidence that the Muslims would endure the war (cf. Figure 6).

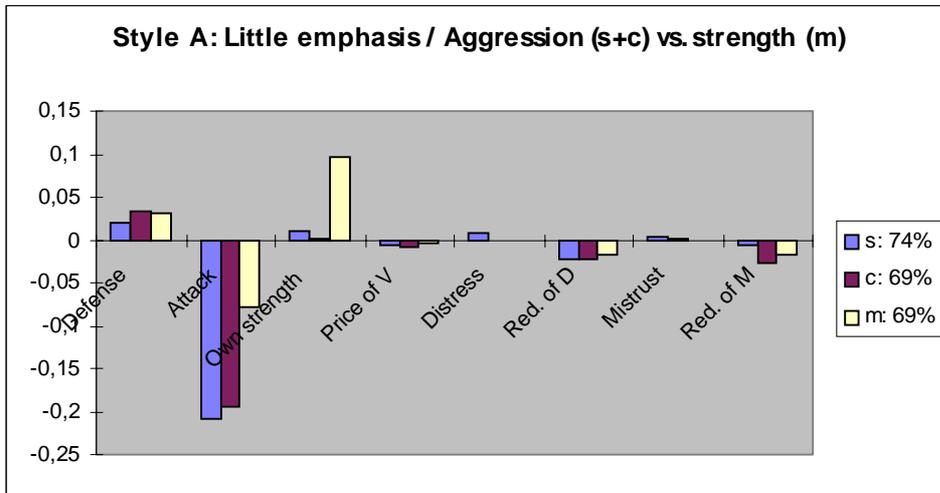


Figure 6: The main tenor of interpunktuation.

The second style (cf. Figure 7) is either ambivalent or results from the presentation of two sided messages (cf. Reimann, 1998). It presents each of the ethnic groups as attacking and defensive at the same time; it stresses both, their strength and the price they would have to pay for military victory; it tends to emphasise the dangerousness of their enemies but also to reduce the distress that results from the threat; sometimes it stimulates mistrust against the opponent, but also tries to reduce it.

This style, which plays only little role in the coverage of the Muslims (3%) is most frequently used for depicting the Croat side (14%). In case of Croat actors, this ambivalent interpunktuation exists in two variants (cf. Figure 8), one of which gives less attention to the interpunktuation than in case of reporting about Serbian or Muslim actors (12.6%), while the other is used quite seldomly only (1.4%).

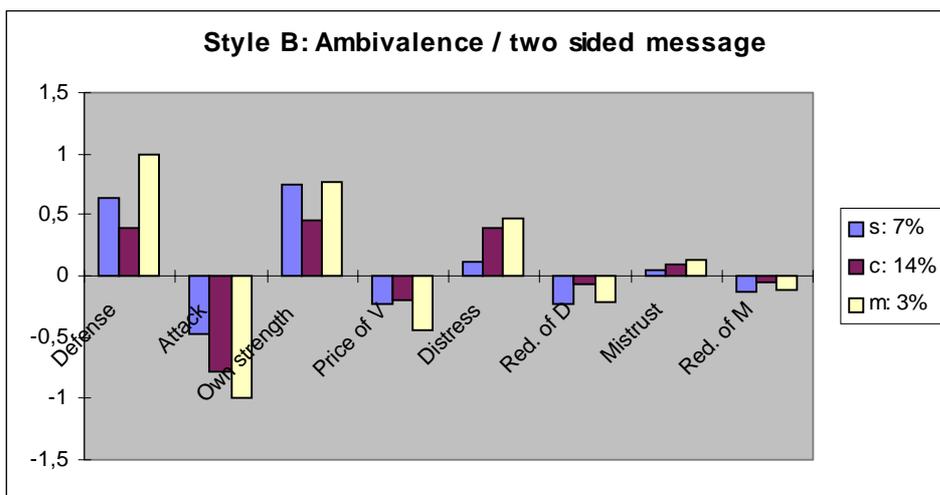


Figure 7: Ambivalent interpunktuation.

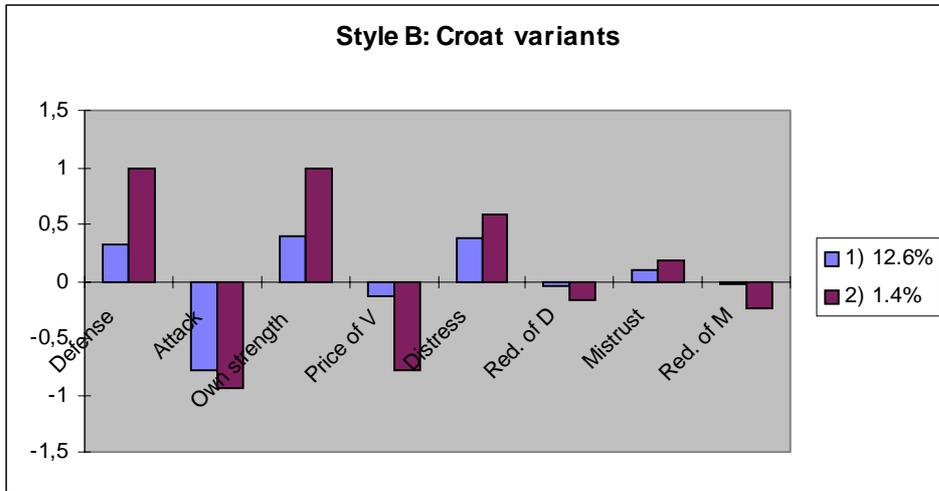


Figure 8: Croat variants of ambivalent interpunctuation.

The third style (cf. Figure 9) puts most emphasis on the conflict parties' own strength and is most frequently used for depicting the Muslim side (28%), for which it exists in four variants (cf. Figure 10).

Variants 1 and 2 are used most frequently.

- Variant 1 (16.8%), which shows the Muslims often in a position of attack, is most similar to the Serbian (19%) and Croat (17%) form of this style (cf. Figure 9), but gives less emphasis to their strength, thus making them - though attacking - look less dangerous.
- Variant 2 (9.3%), on the other hand, which clearly depicts the Muslims in a defensive position, also stresses their strength most clearly.

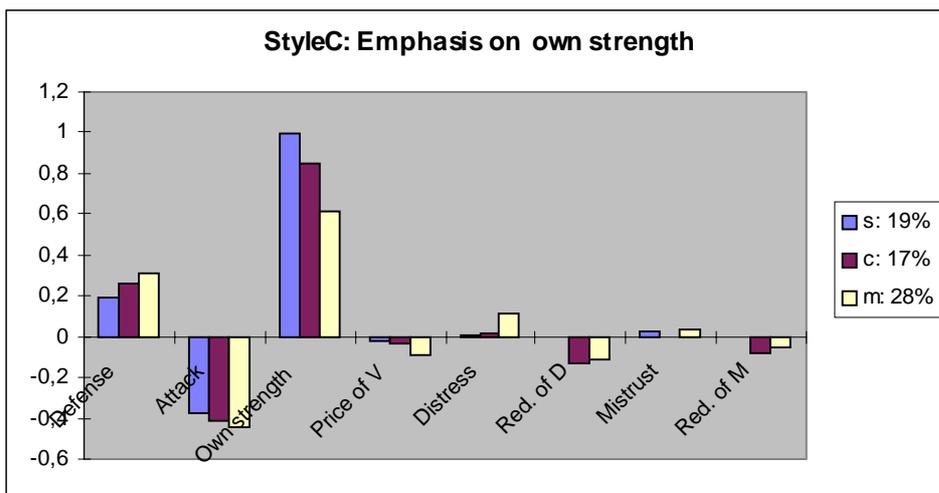


Figure 9: Emphasis on own strength.

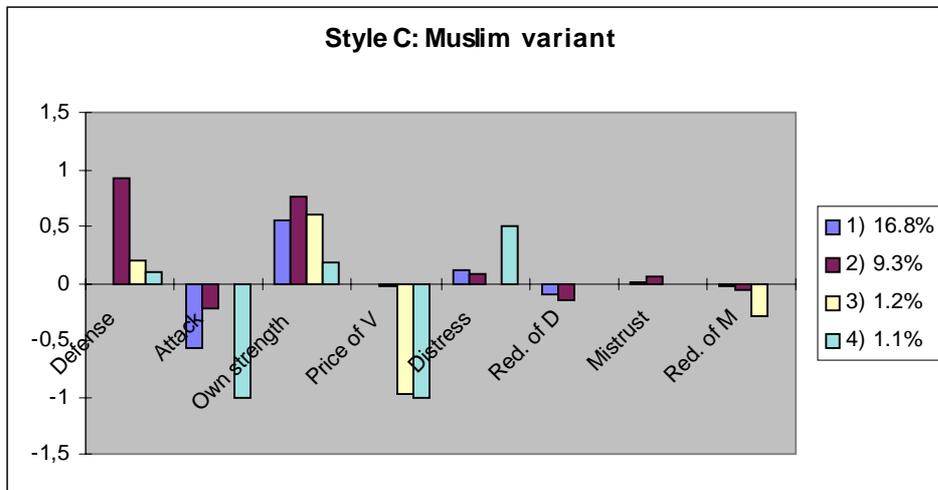


Figure 10: Muslim variants of emphasis on own strength.

Variant 3 and 4 focus on the price, the Muslims would have to pay for military victory.

- In variant 3 (1.2%), where they are also portrayed rather in a defensive position (though much less than in variant 2), their strength is also emphasised to a considerable amount, and some attention is given to the reduction of mistrust against their enemy (1.2%).
- In variant 4 (1.1%), which puts the Muslims clearly into an attacking position, finally, the dangerousness of the Muslim side is reduced by giving much less attention to their own strength and instead stressing the distress which is executed on them by the dangerousness of their enemies.

#### *Incentives for social identification*

The uneven coverage of the three ethnic groups becomes even more evident, if we look at the incentives for social identification that were provided by the press. While incentives for social identification were twice as high for Croat and particularly for Muslim victims than for Serbian victims, the press did not only disregard of Serbian victims, but even dehumanised them to a considerable amount. Vice versa, dehumanisation of Muslim and also Croat élites was much lower than in the Serbian case (cf. Figure 11, Table 9).

Though Latent Styles Analysis unveiled that the main tenor of the press coverage of all three groups was oriented towards identification with their victims, these incentives were much weaker in case of Serbian victims than in case of Croat or - especially - of Muslim victims, where this main tenor was the one and only style of coverage that guided 100% of the reports about Muslims (cf. Figure 12).

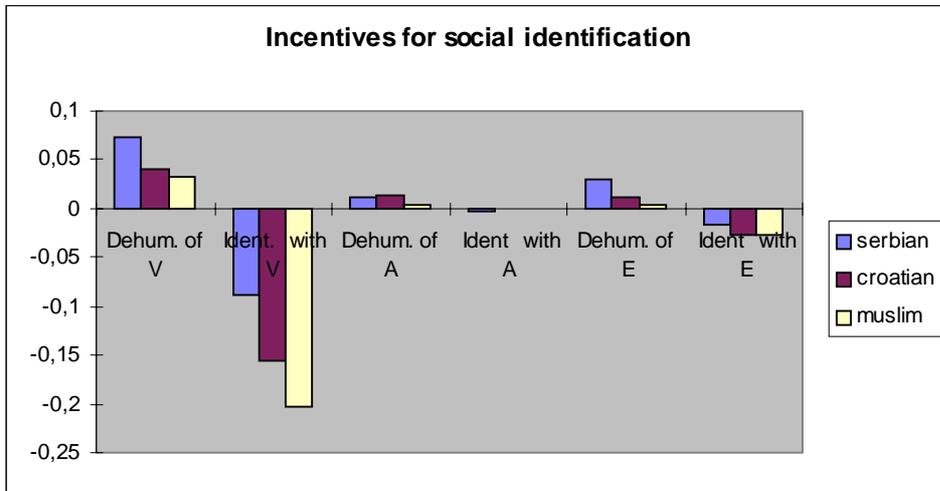


Figure 11: Internal actors: Incentives for social identification (relative frequencies)

Incentives for social identification	serbian	croat	muslim	X <sup>2</sup> , df=2	sign.
Dehumanisation of victims	150	35	37	29.1664	p<0.001
Identification with victims	178	137	228	84.4206	p<0.001
Dehumanisation:Identification	1:1.2	1:3.9	1:6.2		
Dehumanisation af actors	26	12	5	5.8179	n.s.
Identification with actors	4	0	1	---	---
Dehumanisation:Identification	1:0.2	1:0	1:0.2		
Dehumanisation of élites	61	10	5	29.4897	p<0.001
Identification with élites	32	24	31	6.2978	n.s.
Dehumanisation:Identification	1:0.5	1:2.4	1:6.2		

Table 9: Internal actors: Incentives for social identification (absolute frequencies).

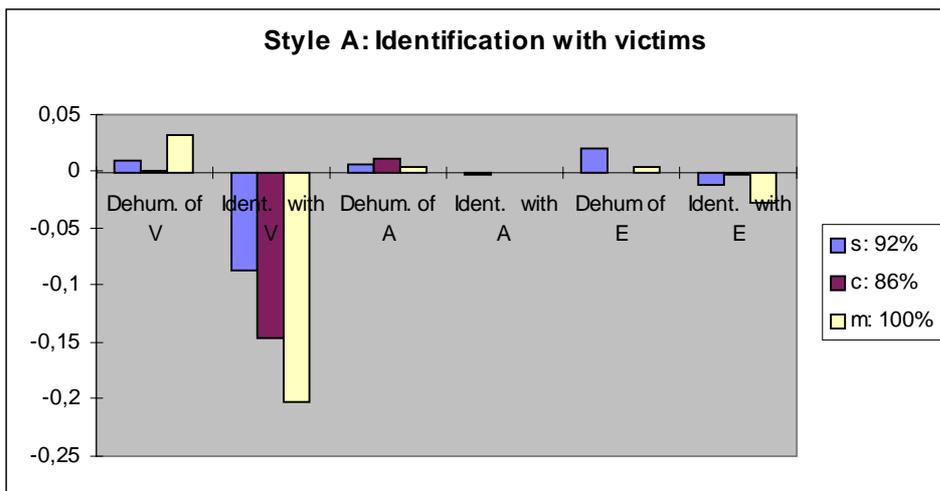


Figure 12: Identification with victims.

Both, in the coverage of Serbs and in the Coverage of Croats, the media used another style also, which dehumanized the victims and which was never used in the coverage of Muslims. While this style was used slightly more often for Croats than for Serbs, the dehumanisation of victims was three times higher in the Serbian case than in the Croat case (cf. Figure 13).

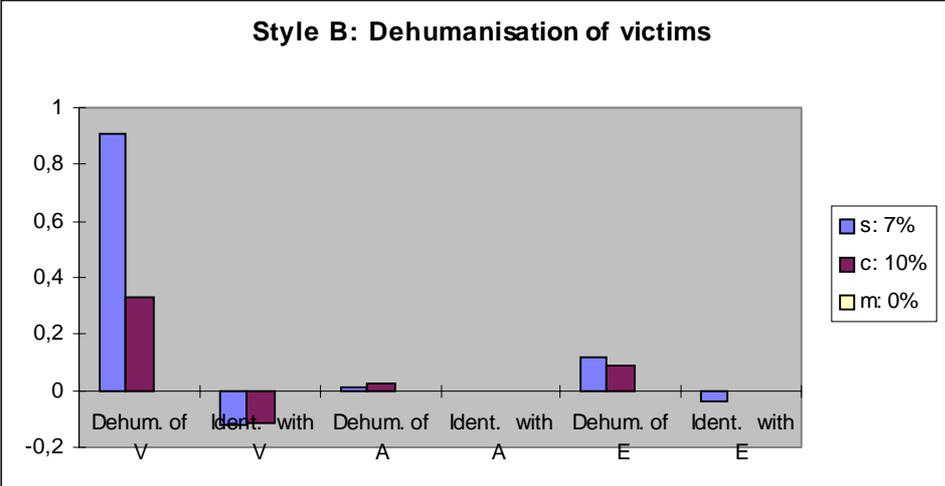


Figure 13: Dehumanisation of victims

This partiality of the press is also present in the third style, which focuses on dehumanisation (mainly with actors) in case of Serbs, and on social identification (both, with élites and victims) in case of Croats (cf. Figure 14).

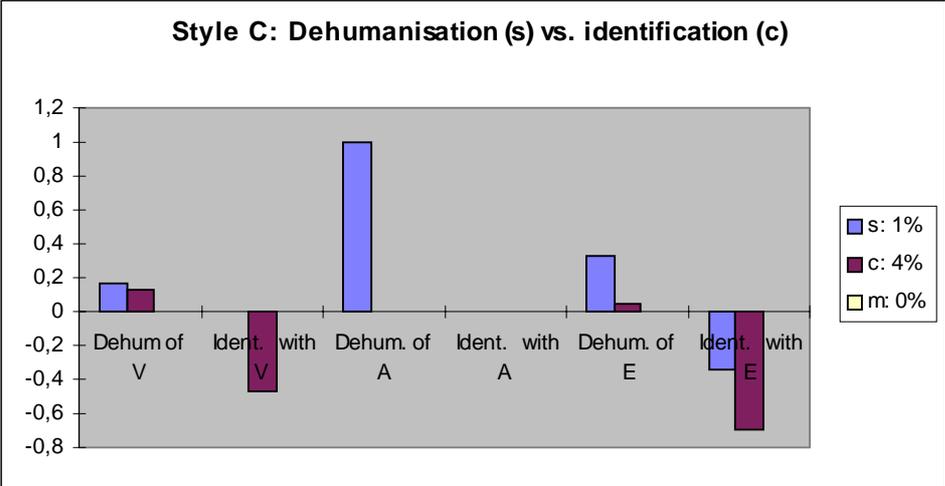


Figure 14: Dehumanisation of Serbian actors vs. identification with the Croat élite

## Conclusions

Summarizing the results presented so far, we come to the conclusion that the coverage of the three ethnic groups involved in the Bosnia conflict was quite uneven. The differences between the media images of the three groups were partly due to the different roles in which they were portrayed by the media.

The most positive role was constructed for the *Muslims*, whose behavior was depicted as least confrontative. The Muslims were depicted less often in a position of attack and more often in a defensive position than Serbs and Croats. And, although Muslim actions were more often criticised than those of the other groups, the press directed the indignation about war most often against their enemies. And it presented more incentives for identification with Muslim victims than with those on the other side(s).

The main tenor of interpretation of the conflict put the Muslims less clearly into an attacking position than the others. It rather stressed their strength and thus tended to support confidence that the Muslims would endure the war.

Often, the Muslims were depicted in a clearly defensive position. In this case, the strength of the Muslim side was emphasized even more. If the Muslims were shown in a position of attack, on the other hand, their dangerousness was reduced by giving less attention to their strength and/or by emphasizing the distress which was executed on them by the dangerousness of their enemies.

Both, Serbs and Croats were rather portrayed as aggressors. While Serbs were portrayed as least defensive, the Croats appeared as most attacking.

Although military logic was the least reported on the *Serbian* side and the press put the least emphasis on explicit evaluation of Serbian actions (whether positive or negative), the negative image of the Serbs resulted from other factors, however.

First of all, Serbian actors were covered by the media twice as often as each of the other groups, and Serbian behavior was depicted as most confrontative.

Second, Serbian rights and intentions were given little emphasis, and as possibilities for cooperation between Serbs and their opponents were accentuated, the confrontative Serbian behavior appeared to be unjustified even the more.

Third, the press stimulated the least outrage about the opponents of the Serbs and presented the suffering of the Serbian side most often together with the suffering of their counterparts.

Fourth, incentives for social identification with Serbian victims were extremely low and there was even a considerable amount of dehumanisation of victims (and to some extent also of actors) on the Serbian side.

Moreover, the media tended to support the cooperation between Croats and Muslims by giving more attention to the price of military victory and to the reduction of mistrust between the parties than in the Serbian case. They also put more emphasis on the distress executed on Croats and Muslims by their opponent's dangerousness and thus disqualified the Serbs even the more.

While it is not surprising that the international press portrayed the Muslims in a defensive role and the Serbs in the role of the evil doers, the really striking result of the analyses is, how the press managed to get the Croats out of the line of fire.

The *Croats* were portrayed as giving most emphasis to military logic (both, positively and negatively) and rejecting the logic of peace most decidedly. Indignation about the war, was nearly as high in the context of Croat actions as in the Serbian case. On the other hand, Croat actions were justified more often than those of the other ethnic groups, and Croat rights and intentions found the most attention (both, positively and negatively).

Although the possible gain from putting an end to the conflict was stressed in the context of Croat actions, possibilities for cooperation of Croats and their opponents were rejected more often than in case of the other groups, and there was rather high indignation about the enemies of the Croats.

Thus both, the Croat emphasis on military logic, as well as the rejection of peace logic by the Croats, were seemingly justified by giving high priority to their rights and intentions and by the rejection of cooperative alternatives.

This two sided strategy of reporting facts that are in danger to unmask the Croats as the real hardliners and warmongers and raising understanding for their position becomes evident also in the high percentage of ambivalent interpunctuation of the conflict, and in the relatively strong incentives for social identification, both, with Croat victims and with the Croat élite.

### **International actors**

Despite the fact, that the international press reported quite uneven about the three ethnic groups, it did not just take sides and spread propaganda which put Muslims and/or Croats on the side of the good and the Serbs on the side of the evil. The press was quite ambiguous about all three of them.

The depiction of every single group was dominated by the description of confrontative behavior, and all of them were depicted as following military logic. Denial of rights and/or imputation of "bad intentions" dominated the recognicance of rights or "good intentions" regardless of which group was covered.

The international press identified itself with none of the Bosnian war parties, but rather with the international community itself who had a problem with the war parties down at Bosnia. In doing so, however, the press did not so much support the efforts at peaceful conflict resolution but rather a policy of power heading at military intervention. The more international actors got involved in the conflict as external actors, the greater was media sympathy for them.

### *Conceptualisation of the conflict*

Differences in the coverage of international actors involved in the conflict as external actors and those who were acting from a mediating third party position, demonstrate the gross dominance of the war discourse in modern media. Logic of peace was

reported mainly on the side of external actors, where it served to legitimize predominantly confrontative behavior, which - at the same time - was put in the context of military logic (whether positive or negative) much less than third party mediation efforts (cf. Figure 15, Table 10).

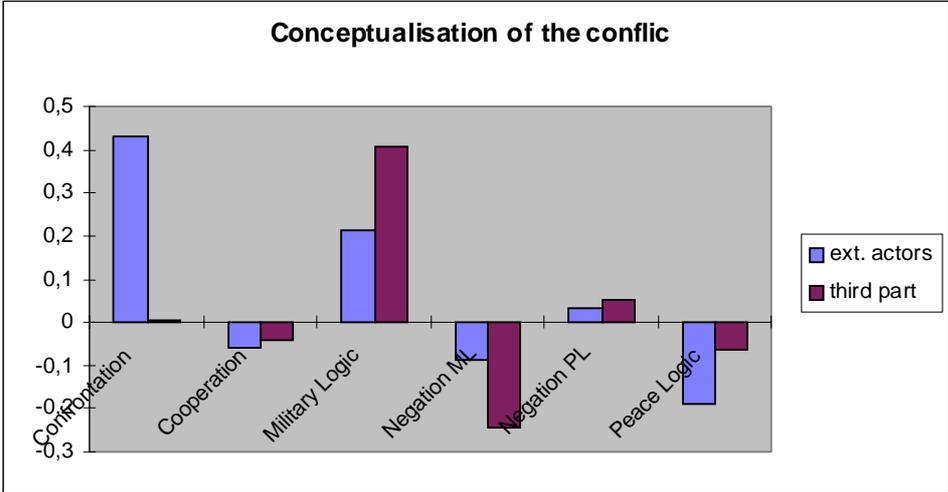


Figure 15: International actors: Conceptualisation of the conflict (relative frequencies).

Conceptualisation of the conflict	external actors	third party	X <sup>2</sup> , df=1	sign.
Confrontative behavior	452	91	379.8399	p<0.001
Cooperative behavior	61	48	3.7651	n.s.
conf:coop	1:0.1	1:0.5		
Military logic	226	482	95.7429	p<0.001
Negation of military logic	91	289	96.9653	p<0.001
ML:Negation ML	1:0.4	1:0.6		
Negation of peace logic	35	61	4.4052	n.s.
Peace logic	200	78	79.8235	79.8235
Negation PL:PL	1:5.7	1:1.3		

Table 10: International actors: Conceptualisation of the conflict (absolute frequencies).

*Evaluation of rights, intentions and actions*

Third party actors were more than twice as often accused of bad intentions than external actors (cf. Figure 16, Table 11).

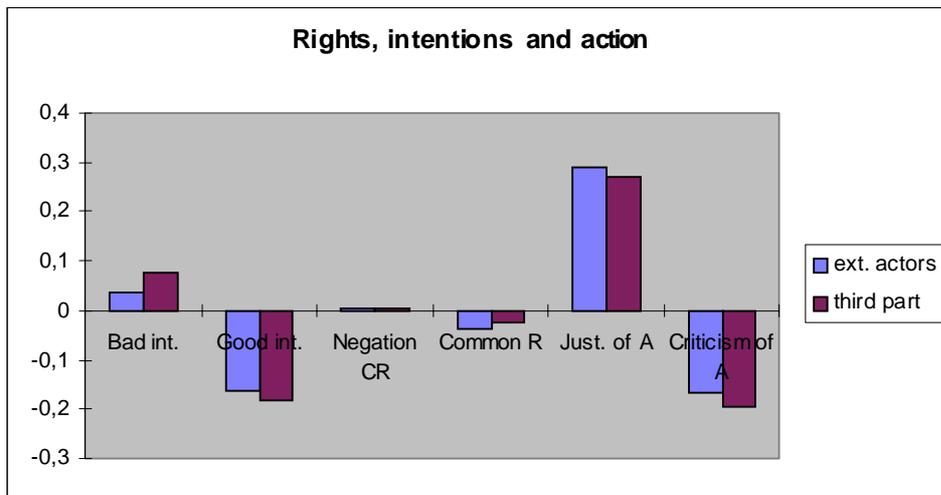


Figure 16: International actors: Evaluation of rights, intentions and actions (relative frequencies).

Rights, intentions and actions	external actors	third party	X <sup>2</sup> , df=1	sign.
Denial of rights and/or imputation of bad intentions	37	91	17.6832	p<0.001
Recognizance of rights or good intentions	172	219	1.6299	n.s.
Bad I:Good I	1:4.6	1:2.4		
Denial of common rights or possibilities f. cooperation	4	4	0.0306	n.s.
Common rights and/or possibilities for Cooperation	41	30	3.4530	n.s.
Negation CR:CR	1:10.3	1:7.5		
Justification or unbiased evaluation of actions	307	320	1.2349	n.s.
Criticism or demonisation of actions	174	230	2.9304	n.s.
Justification: Criticism	1:0.6	1:0.7		

Table 11: International actors: Evaluation of rights, intentions and actions (absolute frequencies).

### *Incentives for social identification*

Incentives for social identification, both, with victims and with élites were extremely stronger for external actors, and third party actors were even dehumanised in some cases (cf. Figure 17, Table 12).

In most of the reports about third party actors (95%), the press presented (nearly) no incentives for social identification at all (cf. Figure 18). In those few reports, where the press presented (rather) strong incentives for identification with third party actors, the dehumanisation of third party actors was as strong as the incentives for identification with third party victims (presumably both mostly members of peace groups or NGOs).

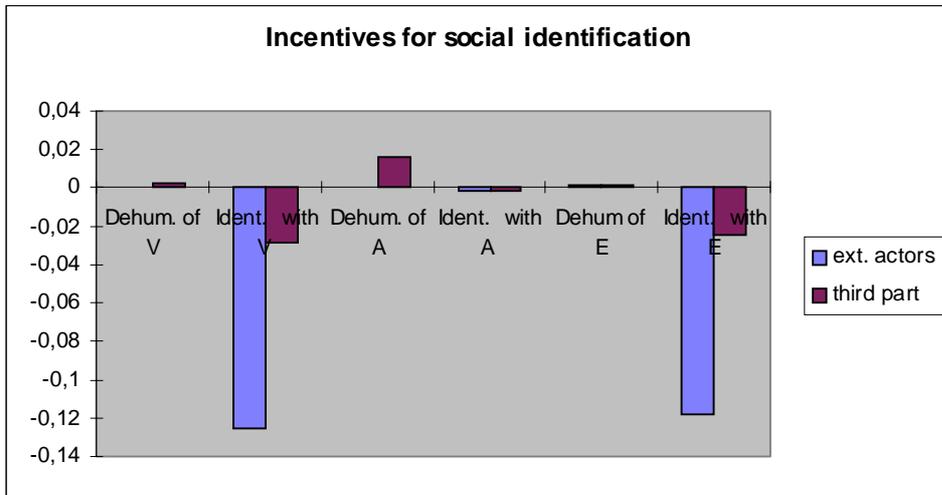


Figure 17: International actors: Incentives for social identification (relative frequencies).

Incentives for social identification	external actors	third party	X <sup>2</sup> , df=1	sign.
Dehumanisation of victims	0	4	---	---
Identification with victims	131	34	75.4418	p<0.001
Dehumanisation:Identification	0:131	1:8.5		
Dehumanisation of actors	0	19	16.9367	p<0.001
Identification with actors	1	1	---	---
Dehumanisation:Identification	0:1	1:0.05		
Dehumanisation of élites	2	2	---	---
Identification with élites	124	30	74.9796	p<0.001
Dehumanisation:Identification	1:62	1:15		

Table 12: International actors: Incentives for social identification (absolute frequencies).

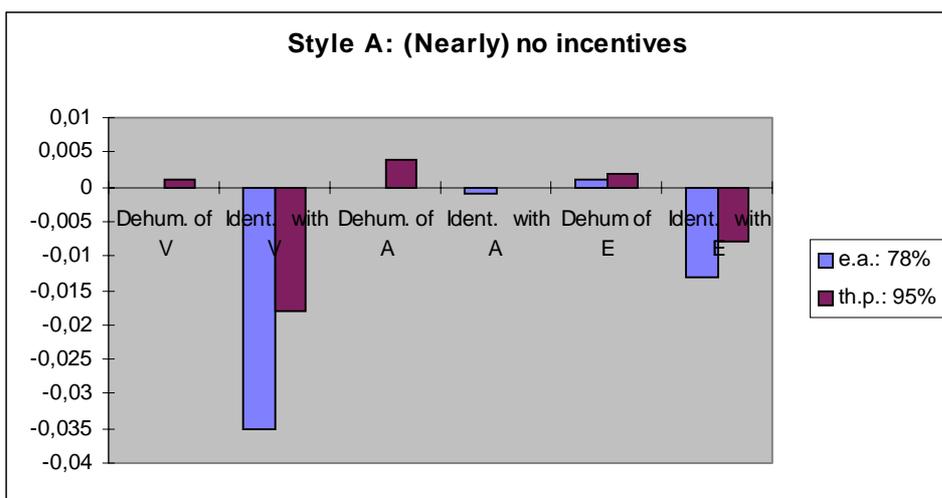


Figure 18: International actors: Weak incentives for social identification.

Strong incentives for social identification with external actors were presented much more often (22%), they were stronger, and they never involved dehumanisation of actors (cf. Figure 19).

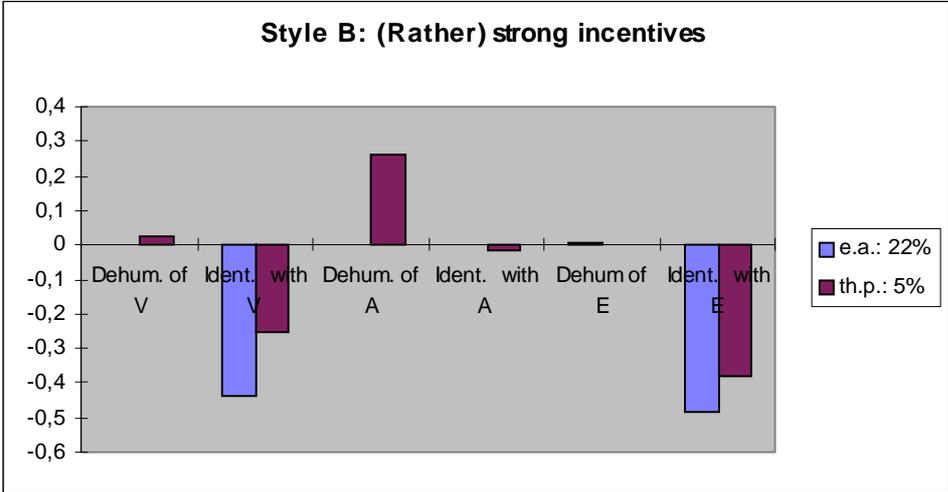


Figure 19: International actors: Strong incentives for social identification.

*Coverage of third party actors*

How little support the international press gave to third party mediation efforts becomes even more visible from the results of latent styles analysis which identified five different styles of reporting about third party actors. Figure 20 shows the (relative) frequency with which these styles were used during the different time spots of the Bosnia conflict that were analysed (cf. Table 2).

The first of these styles (Style A) is representative for 53% of the reports and gives only little attention to third party actors (cf. Figure 21). It rather reports about confrontative behavior and puts it in the framework of military logic (whether positive or negative) and an ambivalent evaluation of third party actions (cf. Table 13). This is the dominant style of coverage throughout the whole conflict except timespot 10 (peace initiative by Jimmy Carter), timespot 14 (NATO attack on Bosnian Serbs) and timespot 15 (Dayton-agreement).

Style B (cf. Figure 22) follows in the second place (19%) and is used particularly during timespot 7 (first time NATO reacts with force to the violation of the UN imposed no-fly zone over Bosnia) and 14 (NATO attack on Bosnian Serbs in August 95). This style puts third party's actions strictly into a framework of military logic, it emphasises the justification of the third party's action, and (though with little emphasis) attributes good intentions to them (cf. Table 13).

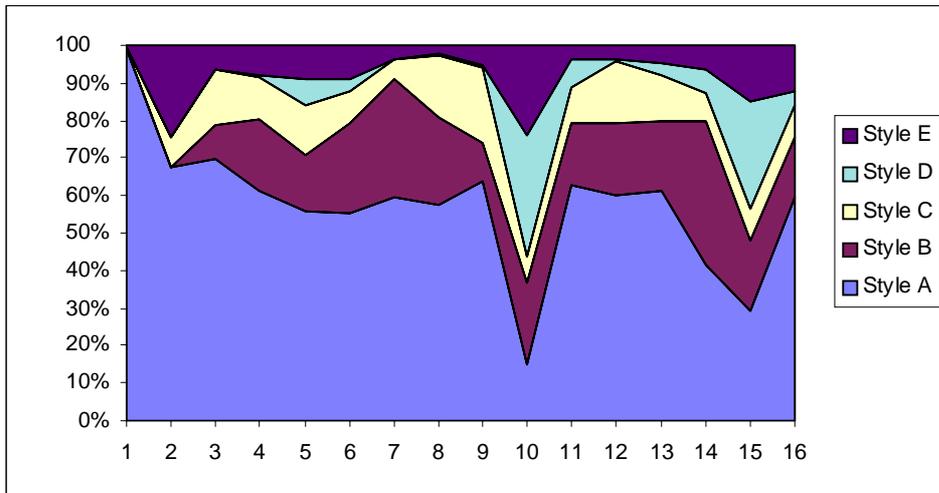


Figure 20: Third party actors: Style usage during 16 time spots of the Bosnia conflict.

	Style A	Style B	Style C	Style D	Style E
Confrontative B:Cooperative	1:0.2	1:0.2	1:0.6	1:1.5	1:0.9
[ML √ NegPL] : [PL √ NegML]	1:0.8	1:0.3	1:0.9	1:0.9	1:1.9
Bad Intentions : Good Intentions	1:1.5	1:3.9	1:41.7	1:1.5	1:2.4
Justification of A: Criticism of A	1:0.8	1:0.6	1:1.7	1:0.6	1:0.6

Table 13: Ratio of escalation and deescalation oriented framing in the coverage of third party actors.

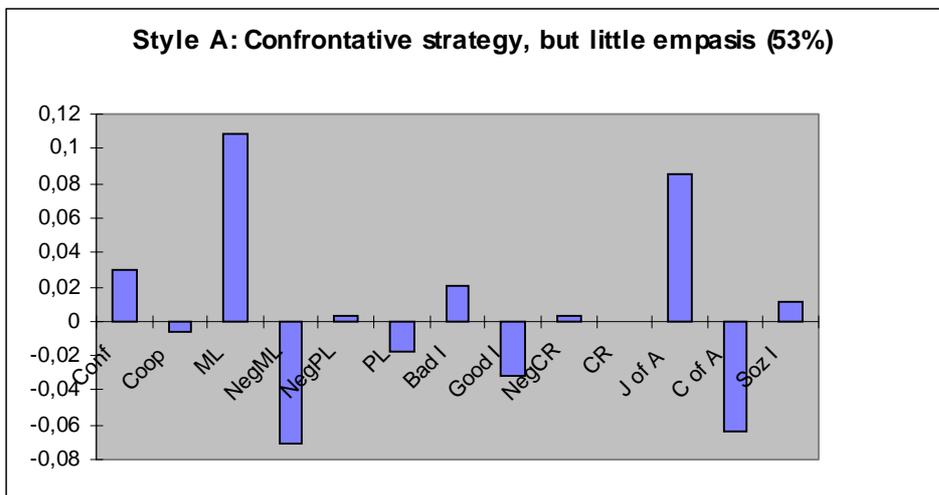


Figure 21: Third party actors: Confrontative strategy, but little emphasis.

Style C (cf. Figure 23) is also used throughout the whole conflict (12%), particularly during timespot 3 (Peace demonstrations in Sarajewo and Belgrade), timespot 4 (Grenade attack against Sarajewo, first UN sanctions), timespot 5 (Maslenica-Offensive, Vance-Owen-Plan), and even more so during timespot 8 (Peace Plan of

the Contact Group, Isolation of Bosnian Serbs), timespot 9 (Bihaj) and timespot 12 (Sharpening of the confrontation between Bosnian Serbs and UN/NATO). This style is the only one which gives some attention to common rights and possibilities of cooperation between third party and one or both of the parties at conflict. Third party's actions are framed ambivalently between military logic and logic of peace, and though great emphasis is given to third party's good intentions, this style is most critical about their actions (cf. Table 13).

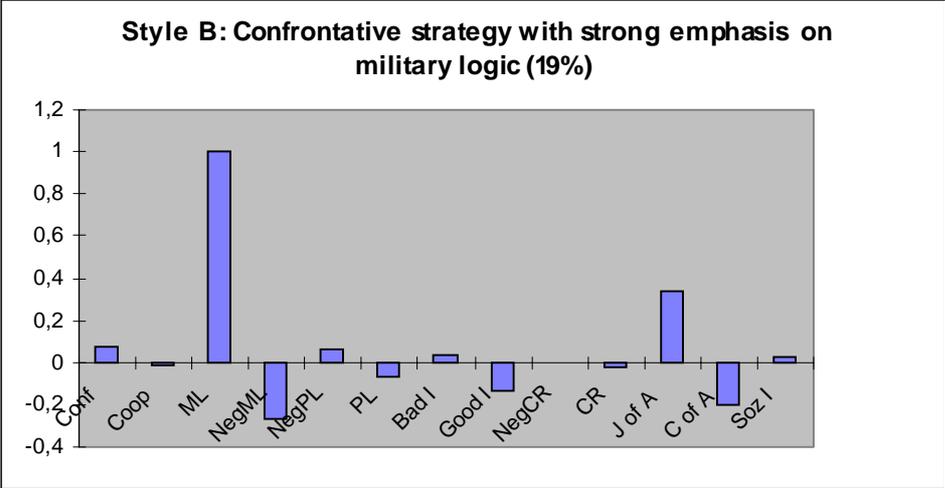


Figure 22: Third party actors: Confrontative strategy with strong emphasis on military logic.

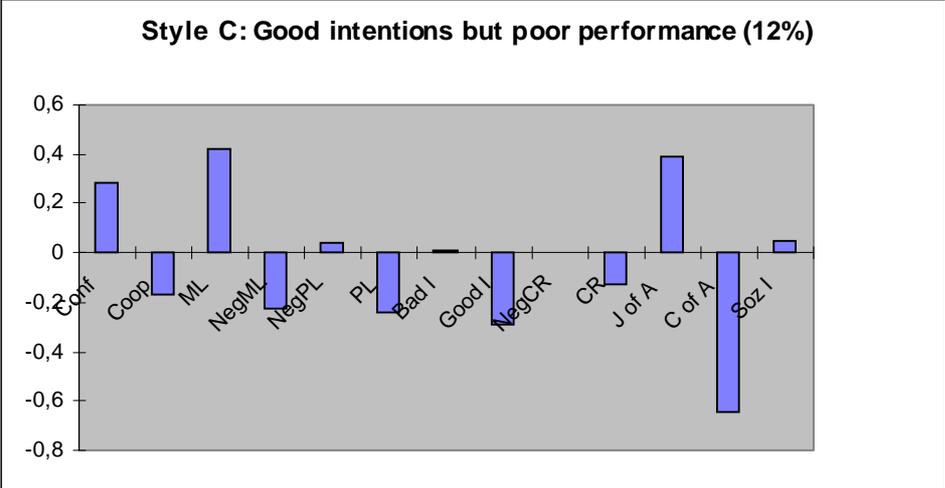


Figure 23: Third party actors: Good intentions but poor performance.

Style D (cf. Figure 24) is characteristic for the coverage of peace initiatives, especially of the initiative by Jimmy Carter (timespot 10) during which it is the

predominant style, but also of the Dayton negotiations (timespot 15) and of the Vance-Owen-Plan (timespot 5). This style is the only one that depicts third party behavior rather as cooperative than as confrontative and which presents incentives of social identification with third party actors to a considerable amount. As in Style C, third party's actions are framed ambivalently between military logic and logic of peace. Great emphasis is given to the relative justification of third party actions and to the evaluation of third party intentions, about which this style not so positive, however (cf. Table 13).

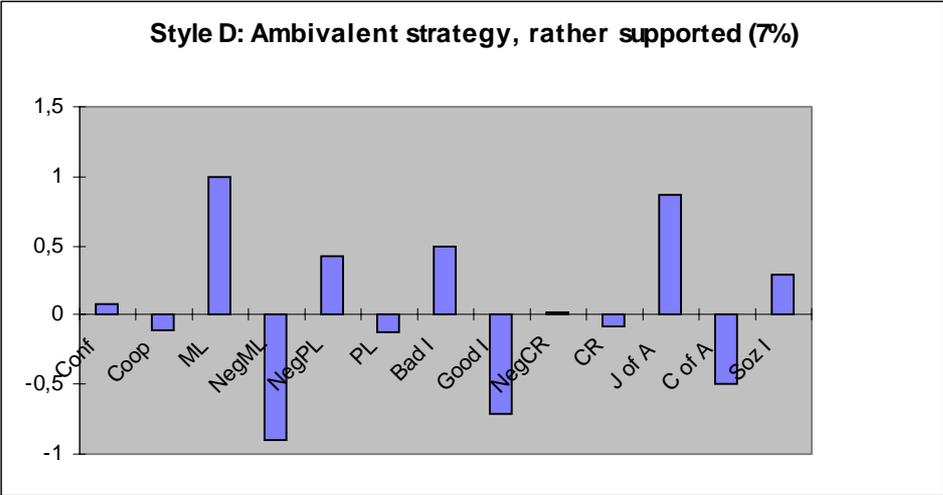


Figure 24: Third party actors: Ambivalent strategy, rather supported.

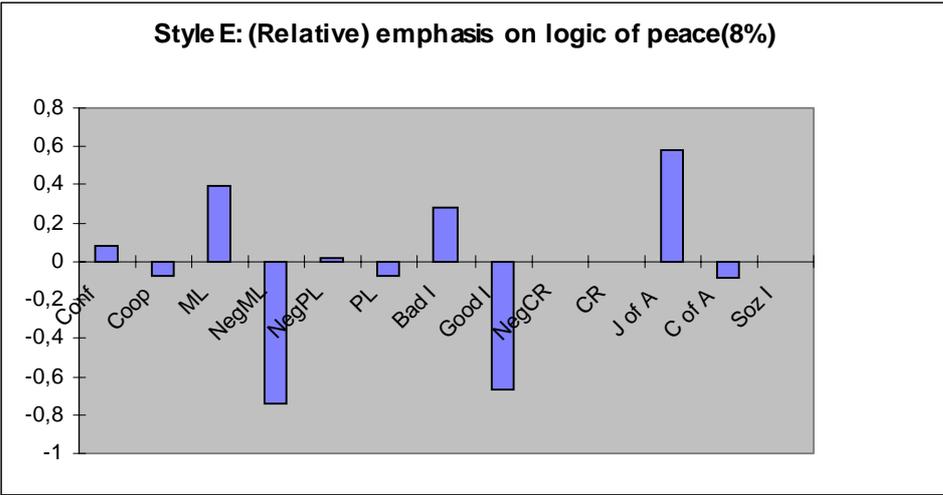


Figure 25: Third party actors: (Relative) emphasis on logic of peace.

Style E (cf. Figure 25), finally, is the only one which frames third party behavior within logic of peace. This style, which also puts great emphasis on (relative) recognizance of third party's good intentions (cf. Table 13) is used mainly during timespot 2 (Recognition of Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia), timespot 10 (Peace initiative by Jimmy Carter) and timespots 15-16 (Dayton negotiations and the aftermath).

## Conclusions

The dominance of war culture in the coverage of third party interventions becomes evident, if we summarize:

*72% of the articles supported a policy of power by focusing on confrontative behavior (Styles A,B) and framing it with bias towards military logic.*

*19% of the articles had both, a strong focus and a clear bias towards military logic (Style B)*

This style of coverage was most frequently used by the British *The Times* and the Israeli *Jerusalem Post* (cf. Figure 27), which demonstrates the damage which civil war in Northern Ireland and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have caused for the political culture of the two countries. In the French *Le Monde*, this style was used even less than in the Finnish *Helsingin Sanomat*.

*53% of the articles had the same sort of bias, but disregarded of third parties more or less and gave only little attention to them (Style A).*

This is the predominant style in all of the analysed papers, and especially in *Helsingin Sanomat* where it is characteristic for 87% of the coverage (cf. Figure 27).

From a position of Finland's relative historical, political and geographical distance from the Bosnia conflict, *Helsingin Sanomat* presented the most detached coverage, though sharing the consensus of the international public opinion which put the blame on the Serbs and promoted an international intervention.

Also the Austrian *Die Presse* and the German papers, made use of this detached style of reporting more frequently than the other papers. Being in danger to raise reservations, that might be caused by Germany's and Austria's historical links to fascist Croatia and their historical enmification with Serbia dating back to World War I, the German and Austrian press was quite reluctant in their Bosnia coverage. In Germany, where the whole political spectrum of nationwide newspapers was analysed, this reluctance was national consensus and there were no significant differences in coverage from the post-communist *Neues Deutschland* to the right wing conservative *Die Welt* (cf. Figure 26). Never, since the end of World War II public opinion about a war was as unified in Germany as about the Bosnia conflict into which German diplomacy was more involved than in any other military conflict since 1945.

*12% of the articles put great emphasis on the criticism of third parties' actions, which - though depicted as less confrontative than in Styles A and B - were framed ambivalently between military logic and logic of peace (Style C).*

This style, which criticised the third parties either for not being strict enough or for acting within the framework of military logic, was used more often by *Le Monde* than by any other of the analysed papers.

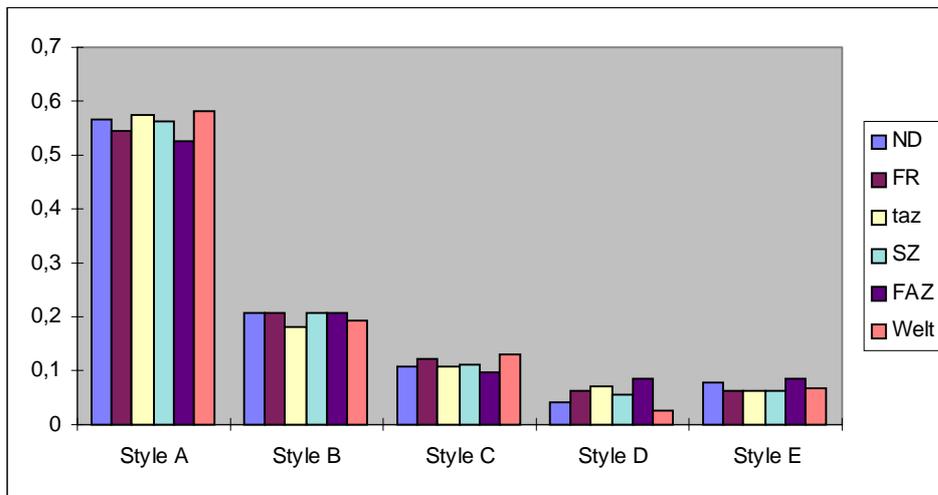


Figure 26: Third party coverage: differences between German newspapers (chi-square = 5.9472, df = 20, n.s.).

*Only 15% of the articles reported about third parties in a slightly more positive way: Though with strong focus, but only with slight bias towards military logic, 7% of the articles reported rather about cooperative behavior and presented some incentives for social identification with the third party (Style D).*

This style, which was predominant during Jimmy Carter's peace initiative (timespot 10) and during the Dayton negotiations (timespot 15) was used by the American *New York Times* more than twice as often (20%) as in the other countries' press. In the *Die Presse*, this style was characteristic only for 3% of the third party coverage, which unveils how little public opinion in Austria was interested in giving peace a chance rather than defeat the Serbs.

*Only 8% of the articles focused on peace logic and framed third party actions rather within logic of peace than within military logic (Style E).*

This style, which was used mainly during timespot 2 (Recognition of Slovenia, Bosnia and Croatia), timespot 10 (Peace initiative by Jimmy Carter) and timespots 15-16 (Dayton negotiations and the aftermath), is characteristic for the coverage of *Le Monde*, where it was found more than three times as often (27%) as in the other countries' press. While the French public opinion, obviously, had great interest in peaceful conflict transformation, it is once more *Die Presse* (5%), which<sup>4</sup> showed the least readiness to support alternatives to the use of military force in order to put an end to war.

<sup>4</sup> If we disregard of the misattention that *Helsingin Sanomat* paid to third party actors in the Bosnia conflict.

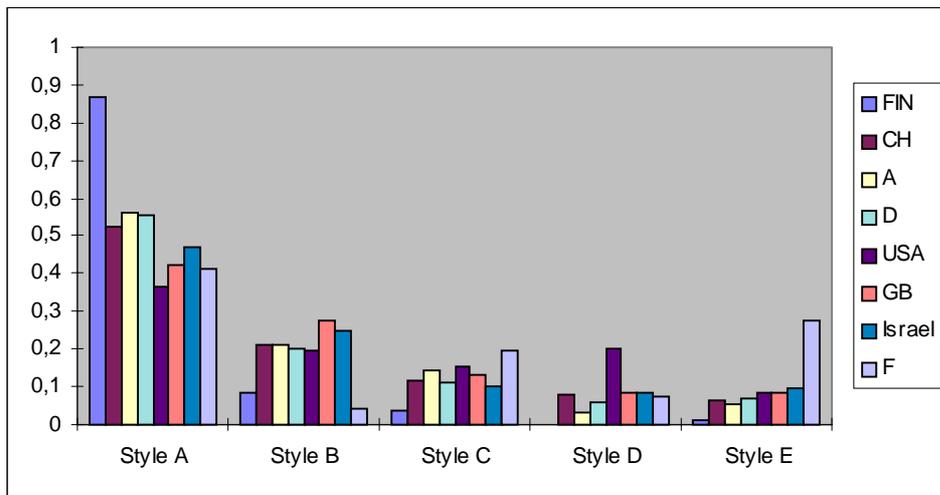


Figure 27: Third party coverage: differences between countries (chi-square = 123.57, df = 28,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Conclusions

Compared with the animosity with which the propaganda war was fought among Western journalists, the day-to-day coverage of the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina seems to be surprisingly little tendentious. As the present study of the prestige press in Europe and the U.S. shows, the Western media did not take side during the Bosnia conflict as clearly as they had done during the Gulf War.

At least the day-to-day coverage was quite detached from all three of the Bosnian war parties. The depiction of every single ethnic group was dominated by the description of confrontative behavior, and all of them were depicted as following military logic. Denial of rights and/or imputation of "bad intentions" dominated the recognizance of rights or "good intentions" regardless of which group was covered. However, the press reported about Serbian actors much more often than about Bosnian or Croatian ones. This is in accordance with the judgement of the Norwegian human rights expert Hanne-Sophie Greve (1995), according to which all sides had committed crimes during the Bosnia War, but the number and atrocity of Serbian trespasses was the highest.

A similar result was found by Susanne Jaeger (1998). According to her results, the German press reported about rape incidents more differentiated than would have been expected. More than 50% of the analysed texts dealt with the topic quite dispassionate and kept away from interpretations. On the other hand, there was also a reasonable high share of texts, however, that dealt mainly with Serbian violence against Non-Serbian women. In particular these texts showed a tendency to use the suffering of the victims in order to assess which side was the most guilty.

As the present study shows, the differences between the media images of the three ethnic groups were mainly due to the different roles in which they were portrayed by the media.

The most positive role was constructed for the Muslims, who were depicted as behaving least confrontative and most often in a defensive situation. In accordance with this, the press also presented more incentives for identification with Muslim victims than with those on the other side(s). Both, Serbs and Croats on the other hand, were rather portrayed as aggressors.

While it is not surprising that the international press portrayed the Muslims in a defensive role and the Serbs in the role of the evil doers, the really striking result of the analyses is, how the press managed to get the Croats out of the line of fire: the Croat emphasis on military logic, as well as the rejection of peace logic by the Croats, were justified by giving high priority to their rights and intentions and by the rejection of cooperative alternatives.

Nonetheless, the international press did not just take sides and spread propaganda which put Muslims and/or Croats on the side of the good and the Serbs on the side of the evil. The press was quite ambiguous about all three of them and identified itself with none of the Bosnian war parties, but rather with the international community who had a problem with the war parties down at Bosnia. In doing so, however, journalists' shortage of understanding the logic of peaceful conflict resolution became crucial. As a result, the coverage supported rather a policy of peace enforcement (by military intervention), than a policy of peace making (by third party mediation efforts). The more international actors got involved in the conflict as external actors, the greater was media sympathy for them.

The calamity of the Bosnia coverage was not so much its partiality, nor its commitment for human rights. The calamity of the Bosnia coverage was its captivity in the vicious circle of war and military logic.

72% of the reports about neutral third parties supported a policy of power by focusing on confrontative behavior and framing it with bias towards military logic. 12% of the articles put great emphasis on the criticism of third parties' actions, and only 15% of the articles reported about third parties in a slightly more positive way. Up to date, leading media officials are proud to have convinced (particularly the American) public opinion of the necessity of a NATO intervention and thus to have contributed to putting an end to war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The results of the present study are in accordance with this assumption. But they also show, that the media have failed in so far, as they gave little support to attempts at peaceful conflict resolution during earlier stages of the conflict, and too little attention to diplomatic efforts that could have prevented the escalation of the Yugoslavian crises into a murderous civil war. When the UN Secretary in General had warned the German minister of foreign affairs of the explosive consequences that a premature recognition of the independence of some of the Yugoslavian republics would bring about, the media did not even take notice of the exchange of letters between Pérez de Cuéllar and Genscher.

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