Words and Responsibility – the Relationship between Media Coverage and the Statements

Boris VARGA[*]
Aleksandar MUDRI[**]

Keywords: *mass-media*; *political actors*; *Kosovo*; *Serbia (Vojvodina)*; *Western Balkans*; *ethnic and religious violence*

There are several papers published that deal with the role of the media and the statements of political actors in spreading ethnic and religious hate amongst the nations involved in the disintegration of former Yugoslavia (SFRY) during the war conflicts of the 1990s (Vekarić, 2011). However, it is very difficult to prove the causal relationship between the content published in the media and specific surges of violence. This relationship was not confirmed even during the inappropriately vast and long Hague trials at which charges were laid for the encouragement of inter-ethnic and inter-religious hate on the territory of former Yugoslavia (the Šešelj Indictment, 2007).

After the active war conflicts ended, since the 2000s, there have been occasional and very violent surges of "waves of violence" in Serbia and Kosovo. An almost vindictive overflow of this violence due to the "boomerang effect" principle from one region into another, proves the fact that the Western Balkans are still a volatile environment, without a lasting peace and subject to reoccurring violence. Therefore, using several disciplines (political analysis and media discourse) we investigated the relationship between media content and extremist activities in Serbia and Kosovo. In our analysis, we focus on two major events: surges of verbal and physical violence in Kosovo in March 2004 and in Serbia in 2014.

The *aim* of this research is to investigate the influence of excessive chauvinistic and radical nationalistic messages that stem from media coverage and statements of political actors regarding national and religious relations in Serbia and Kosovo (the Western Balkans).

Temporally speaking, this research covers the period from 2004 to 2014, and *spatially speaking* it covers the region of the state of Serbia, i.e. the self-proclaimed state of Kosovo and mostly the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina.

The *focus* is on the manner of reporting of the Kosovar media during the March violence in 2004 and the statements of the top state actors after the "drone"

[*] Journalist and independent researcher, Novi Sad, Serbia.
[**] University of Novi Sad, Serbia.

„Philologica Jassyensia", an XIII, nr. 2 (26), 2017, p. 267–280

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

case and the beginning of a "wave of violence" in Vojvodina in October 2014. The *corpus* in discourse analysis comprises two groups of texts. The first group refers to the March violence in Kosovo in 2004 and is adopted from the OEBS Report (written by Dardan Gashi in English) covering the period from the 16th to the 17th of March 2004 (during the period of violence). These texts mainly originate from the Kosovar electronic media, mostly the leading TV stations founded after the war in Kosovo in 1999 – *RTK* (Kosovo public service) and private Kosovo TV stations *RTV 21* and *KTV*. When it comes to this group of texts, discourse analysis mainly focuses on the media and their reporting as well as on the statements of the Kosovar political actors. The second group of texts comprises the statements of Serbian political actors concerning the so-called "drone" case. It includes texts published in the Serbian media, mainly daily press and their online editions (*Blic*, *Večernje novosti* and *B92*) in the period from the 15th to the 16th of October 2014 just before a "wave of violence", mainly occurring in Vojvodina.

This analysis relies on only *eleven examples*: *six examples* of reports by the Kosovar media and statements of Kosovar political actors (from OEBS Report in English), as well as *five statements* of top Serbian political actors (in Serbian). *The unit of analysis* in the electronic media includes the responses of journalists from the studio, the reports made by reporters and statements of interlocutors as well as the dates of broadcasting. The unit of analysis of the printed media are online texts, headlines, leads and dates of publication/posting.

1. Politological framework and circumstances

Since nationalism is a dynamic term, in this paper we shall take the stance that ethnic nationalism, in terms of verbal and physical violence, escalates in the following continuum: ethnic nationalism, chauvinism, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (Varga 2013: 75–85).

According to the Lexicon of liberal democracy (*Pojmovnik liberalne demokratije*), *ethnic nationalism* is defined as a commitment to a certain cultural group which has somewhat extended family relations and is thus exclusive in character. It could be said that ethnic nationalism causes chauvinism, radicalism, extremism, and even terrorism, because nation states can taste the bitter taste of the "cure of nationalism that created them" (Mijatović, Vujačić and Marinković 2008: 105).

Chauvinism is a feeling or awareness of the superiority of a member of imaginary or real groups, collectives or communities. In addition, chauvinism, especially national or ethnic chauvinism inevitably implies the inferiority of "others" (Mimica, Bogdanović 2007: 607). In comparison to the radicalism in the classical sense, which promotes a fundamental change and establishment of the new order, contemporary *radical political ideas* and movements in postsocialist states in transition are directed at nationalist political ideologies and at the same time are detrimental to democracy (Tadić 1996: 181).

According to the theory of Coleman and Bartoli, extremism is a complex phenomenon, although its complexity is often hard to be seen. Most simply, it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary. In conflict settings it manifests as a *severe form of*

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

conflict engagement. However, the labeling of activities, people, and groups as "extremist", and defining what is "ordinary" in any setting is always a subjective and political matter (Coleman, Bartoli 2009).

Both *external and internal factors* are favorable for the development of extremist activism. *External factors* primarily include the spirit of our time, or *zeitgeist*, of the rise of nationalism and the right wing in Europe. However, there are other factors as well, such as global financial and economic crisis, the increase of unemployment, and the appearance of an almost separate social "class" of precariat, economic and political migration, as well as the crisis of western multiculturalism.

As for *internal factors*, we can primarily single out the *traumas of a postwar society*. In 1998 the conflicts in Kosovo between the Serbian police and self-proclaimed Liberation Army of Kosovo escalated into a serious war. On the 23rd of September 1998 the Security Council of the United Nations adopted Resolution 1199 thus expressing

> deep concern because of the intensity of the conflicts in Kosovo, especially because of the use of excessive and unselective force by the Serbian police and Yugoslav army, which resulted in an increased number of civilian victims.

According to the estimate of the Secretary General of the UN, around 230,000 people were displaced (mostly Albanians, authors' note) and had to leave their homes (Resolution, 1998). This turmoil led to the NATO intervention from March to June of 1999. After this, the military conflict ended and Kosovo became an international protectorate with another 187,129 people, mostly Serbs, emigrating from the region, according to the Registration of persons displaced from that area (Registration, 2000, 5).

The *weak civil society* and *a general decline in social values in Serbia* is best seen in public opinion surveys, especially among younger generations. At the end of December 2012 the weekly *NIN* published a public opinion survey organized by the Center for the Rights of Children, the Coalition of the Monitoring of the Rights of Children in Serbia and the organization *Save the Children*[1]. The survey was conducted in May 2012 and it included 1358 children and adolescents aged 12 to 18 from ten towns across Serbia.

The general conclusions are that since 2007 children and adolescents have been increasingly supportive of the idea of an ethnically clean state, are intolerant towards the gay population and are ready for violence against them. The research indicates that children and adolescents are mostly supportive of negative attitudes towards the following populations: firstly towards people of a different sexual orientation (36% of informants had a negative attitude toward them), secondly towards atheists (23%), thirdly towards members of other nationalities (21.8%), followed by HIV positive people (19%), towards people of a different religion (11.8%) and straight-A students (18.9%).

The problem of a titular nation and an ethnocentric Constitution was one of the base problems of the "war disintegration" and a difficult democratic transition of

[1]http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2012&mm=12&dd=26&nav_category=12&nav_id=672474 (Accessed 20 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

former socialist federations (SFRY and USSR). According to Linc and Stepan, the independence of postsocialist states was at an advantage over their democratization. Thus, "titular nations" legitimized new regimes via nationalism and minorities became in a way second-class citizens in comparison with the "titular nation" (LINC & STEPAN, 1998, 453-469). Even the first chapter of the *Constitution of Serbia* from 2006 stipulates that "The Republic of Serbia is the state of the Serbian people and all citizens who live there". This projects the impression that in the Republic of Serbia there is a titular nation, "the Serbian people", and others, "all citizens who live there" (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, 2006).

In various analyses of revolutions, the events that lead a revolutionary simmering towards a revolution are called *triggering events* or "accelerators", which are events that frustrate the people and instigate their mobilization for political action. According to Thompson and Kuntz, "stolen" elections can become "triggers" in the mobilization of dissatisfaction and mobilization of the masses against the regime (Thompson, Kuntz 2006: 86). It is not always the rule that "triggering events" mobilize frustrated masses to non-violent political action. On the contrary, political provocations and affairs as well as interethnic relations can by all means cause and move collective action in such way as to ultimately have negative consequences. In our case, reporting on an interethnic incident in the Kosovar media and the statements of Serbian political actors regarding the provocations at the football match caused "waves" of extreme violence in Kosovo and in Serbia.

The *extremists* in Vojvodina (Serbia) can be both individuals and informal collectives, mostly young people, who can have extreme reactions to some events even outside of the borders of the Province. In Vojvodina, the activists of national extremism, who are greatly connected with religious and racial movements, include right-wing movements and individuals, including the most extreme ones such as the organizations "Nacionalni stroj" ("National Machine", banned in June 2011) and "Obraz" ("Cheek", banned in June 2012). In the context of the increase of the so-called "minority nationalism" we can single out groups such as the Youth Movement "64 municipalities" who are of Hungarian ethnicity.

2. Media discourse

Triggering event 1: March violence in Kosovo in 2004

The events in Kosovo in mid March of 2004 raised the question of how biased reporting, especially via influential TV stations, can instigate ethnic and religious violence. The report "The Role of the Media in the March of 2004 Events in Kosovo" written for OEBS by their external associate and journalist Dardan Gashi, describes in detail the surges of violence mainly between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo on the 16th and 17th of March 2004. According to him, the reporting of the Kosovo media had unacceptable levels of emotion, bias, carelessness, and falsely enforced "patriotic" zeal, which caused violent mass protests by 50,000 – 60,000 ethnic Albanians on the 17th of March 2004. These protests were preceded by the protest of former veterans of the Liberating Army of Kosovo on the 16th of March which included around 17,000 people who protested against the inquiries over the war crimes committed by their fellow soldiers conducted by the temporary

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

international mission of the UNMIK and the International Court for War Criminals. Since June 1999 and the arrival of international forces, normally peaceful protests in Kosovo were a frequent occurrence. In the days when the March violence occurred, there were also protests attended by Serbs.

Special criticism for the responsibility in reporting those events was directed at three main Kosovar TV channels: private televisions *RTV 21* and *KTV*, and especially *RTK* (*Radio and Television of Kosovo*) since this is the only public media service. These three TV stations cover the audience of at least 70% of Kosovo population (GASHI, 2004, 3-14).

According to the OSCE statement, the following is the event related by the Kosovar Albanian media that is believed to have sparked the riots: on the 16th of March 2004, six Kosovar Albanian children from the village of Caber, located in the majority Serb-populated municipality of Zubin Potok, were playing on the Serbian side of the river Iber. The river separates the village of Caber from a Serbian neighborhood. At some point, an unidentified group of local Serbs was said to have charged the children with a dog. While escaping, four of the children jumped into the river and as result, only one of the four survived. The surviving child is also the only eye-witness source the media continued to refer to. It was never explained how the two other children – those who did not jump into the river – also survived. Nor was it made clear whether they were also attacked by the Serbs allegedly chasing the group or by the dog, and if not, it was not clarified why not. Finally, neither of the two other surviving children, nor their views, were ever presented in the media during the critical days (Gashi 2004: 4).

Gashi expressed concern that "the electronic broadcast media might have been one of the reasons for the outbreak of violence" and concluded that "without the reckless and sensationalist reporting on the 16th and the 17th of March, events could have taken a different turn. They might have not reached the intensity and level of brutality that was witnessed or perhaps might have not taken place at all" (Gashi 2004: 3).

In Serbia, the events of the 17th and the 18th of March 2004 are considered to be the largest ethnically motivated conflicts in Kosovo since the arrival of the international forces to the province in 1999. In those conflicts 19 people lost their lives (eight Serbs and eleven ethnic Albanians) and 954 people were injured. Over 900 Serbian, Romani, and Ashkali homes were destroyed, 35 Orthodox religious buildings (churches and monasteries) were damaged, and over 4,000 people, mostly ethnic Serbs, were banished from their homes[2].

Discourse:

Example of reporting 1: Discourse strategy "Serbs attacked Albanian children"

On the 16th of March, the independent, private *RTV 21* during their short news broadcast at 10 p.m., reported on the event in the following way:

Presenter:

[2]http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2015&mm=03&dd=17&nav_id=969021 (accessed 20 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

Two Serbs chased four Albanian children today around 16:00 in the village of Caber and, while trying to escape from them, the Albanian children jumped into the Iber river. To learn more details we have our correspondent in Mitrovica…

The correspondent from Mitrovica on the phone:

It is feared that a major tragedy happened today at around 16:00 in the village of Caber, Zubin Potok municipality, the only village inhabited by Albanians in this municipality. As 13-year-old Fitim Cerkin Veseli recalls, he and five other children around his age were walking along the bank of the Iber river. *Then, two persons came out of a Serbian house who had a dog and started chasing the children*.

Example of reporting 2: Discourse strategy "Albanian children are victims of Serbian prosecution" and "All (Albanians from Kosovska Mitrovica, authors' note) have participated in the event"

On the 16th of March, the public service *RTK* reported the following during their 11p.m. flash news:

Presenter:

Three Albanian children, Florent Veseli, 8 years old, Avni Veseli, 11 years old, and Egzon Deliu, 12 years old, went missing in the waters of the Iber river, meanwhile Fitim Veseli, 14 years old, has been found. *They are victims of an attack by a group of Serbs in the village of Caber (...)*. Before seeing the material, we'll go live to our reporter Petrit Musolli, who is at the scene.

Reporter from Mitrovica on the phone:

The police, KFOR and TMK (Kosovo Protection Forces) have not yet found the bodies of the three children *missing after they had fallen into the river Iber while being chased by a group of Serbs*. At the moment, police, KFOR and TMK have put some nets close to the bridge of Binaq in Koshtove in the Iber river, expecting to find the bodies of Florent Veseli, 8 years old, Avni Veseli, 11 years old, and Egzon Deliu, 12 years old…

News presenter:

How is the situation in Mitrovica? Is it under control? How are the citizens reacting?

Reporter:

The situation in Mitrovica is calm at the moment. *Almost all citizens are heading toward the village of Caber* to learn more about the fate of the three children missing in the Iber river.

Example of reporting and statement by political actors 3: Discourse strategy "Violent protest is justified" and "UNMIK is against Albanians and is on the Serbs' side":

In the said OEBS report it was emphasized that on the 16th and the 17th of March there were two types of protests in Kosovo which in a certain way encouraged each other. Considering that the first protests were directed against the temporary international administration UNMIK in Kosovo which investigated war veterans, the Kosovar media again played the role of a biased mediator.

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

RTK, in a special edition on the 17th of March, in an interview with a member of the Kosovar Parliament, a member of the Democratic League of Kosovo party, and a former long-term human rights activist Nekibe Kelmendi, said:

> RTK: *Some say the revolt is understandable*…
>
> N.K.: Of course it is understandable. There have been many things going wrong here…
>
> RTK: How do you see this? *The police are using force and teargas against Albanian protesters, while the Serbs are allowed to block roads for days*?
>
> N.K.: This is a clear double-standard practice that UNMIK has applied from the beginning. This is the effect of so-called "positive discrimination"…

Example of a statement by a political actor 4: Discourse strategy "International forces in Kosovo are not efficient"

In an interview for *RTK* on the 17th of March, another MP, Berat Luzha, said:

> RTK: *The tragic events of last night caused by Serbs and the inefficiency of the security forces*. How do you evaluate this and also how do you view today's protests?
>
> B.L.: This is all due to the failure of UNMIK and the double-standard policy towards the ethnic groups here…

Example of a statement by a political actor 5:Discourse strategy "Legitimate action of Albanians and a lesson for UNMIK"

In an interview for the *RTK* channel on the 17th of March another Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) MP in the Kosovo Parliament Arsim Bajrami said:

> The barbaric act of killing of the children… has provoked a legitimate revolt by the Albanian population. This should be a lesson for the international community...

Example of reporting 6: Discourse strategy "Collective responsibility of Serbs" and "Violence (against Serbs, authors' note) leads to peace":

Reporting of the *KTV media* on the 17th of March – correspondent from Gjakova/Đakovica:

> *The criminal acts of the Serbian population in the north have been condemned by the population of Gjakova during peaceful demonstrations. They demand an end to these terrorist acts against the Albanian population. In an expression of solidarity, the protesters marched towards the Serbian street and the Serbian church was set on fire. The situation is calm, while the church is burning*.

"The Boomerang Effect 1" – Serbs' reactions to violence in Kosovo

A few days later in March 2004 a chain reaction took violence from Kosovo to Serbia. This "wave of violence" over Albanians, citizens of the Muslim religion (Gorani, Albanians, Romani) and their bakeries and patisseries was especially prominent in Novi Sad. In Belgrade and Niš in the night between the 17th and the 18th of March several mosques were set on fire.

The daily paper *Blic* wrote on violence in Novi Sad on the 19th of March:

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

> around 400 high school students left classes and went for a protest walk to express their dissatisfaction with the situation in Kosovo. Using slogans "Kill, slaughter, so «Shiptar»[3] won't exist", and "You sold out Serbia", students went from one school to another calling their peers to cut classes.

This protest included students of several schools.

> By noon around thirty citizens gathered at the crossroads near Banovina (provincial parliament, authors' note) thus blocking the traffic… In the evening of the protest around 1000 people broke windows of the Novi Sad Muslim Community Center as well as several bakeries owned by Albanians which were located on the streets where protesters walked[4].

Triggering event 2: the "Drone" case in Serbia in 2014

A football qualifying match for the European championship between Serbia and Albania, which was held on the 14th of October 2014 on the Partizan FC stadium in Belgrade, was cut short in the 42nd minute with the score of 0:0 because of the fight between the players and because the supporters entered the pitch. This incident was caused by a drone (a light aircraft remotely controlled, authors' note), supposedly controlled by someone from the audience. The drone had the flag of the so-called "Great Albania" attached to it and flew above the pitch for a while carrying this flag.

The incident at the football game happened a week before the planned visit of the Albanian prime minister Edi Rama to Belgrade. His visit was planned for the 22nd of October 2014 but as a result of described events, it was postponed till the 10th of November 2014. In the meantime, interethnic extremist incidents occurred in Serbia, which are the focus of this research.

Several days after the "drone" case, which was the focus of the Serbian media, there was a "wave of violence" from the 16th to the 23rd of October, when various bakeries, kebab stalls and patisseries owned by Serbian citizens of the Muslim faith and by Albanians were destroyed. This happened mostly in Novi Sad, Sombor, Vršac, Stara Pazova and other towns in Vojvodina. A Molotov cocktail was also thrown at the mosque in Subotica[5].

The SNS MP Milovan Drecun said that

> after the attack on and destruction of 23 buildings in Serbia, mainly bakeries, eleven people were arrested, six of whom were minors. All of them were charged with the destruction of property and promotion of racial and religious intolerance… In Belgrade four bakeries were destroyed while in Vojvodina 19 of them were destroyed[6].

[3] Shiptar is a slang word, used by the Serbs, Macedonians and other Slavs to refer to people of Albanian ethnicity. In Albanian language, a person of Albanian ethnicity is called Shqiptar, so "shiptar" derives from that, but in Serbian it has a derogatory meaning and is mainly used as an insult, not just as a term of expression.

[4] http://www.blic.rs/stara_arhiva/tema/59599/Povredjeno-12-ljudi (Accessed 17 August 2015).

[5] http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/vojvodanske-kristalne-noci (Accessed 17 August 2015).

[6] http://www.rtv.rs/sr_lat/vojvodina/novi-sad/za-23-napada-na-pekare-privedeno-11-lica-6-maloletnih_529458.html (accessed 17 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

Discourse:

Example of a statement by a political actor 1: Discourse strategy "Albanians want violence"

In the text entitled "President Nikolić: Albanians wanted riots"[7] published on the site of *Večernje novosti* on the 15th of October 2014, President Nikolić's statement was reported. He insinuated that

> the only thing missing was an explosive device and we would have an impression of the connection with terrorist number one in the world.

Nikolić believed that the drone incident was a "promotion of an unscrupulous and unrealizable idea of the 'Great Albania'".

Presenting Serbia as the only party interested in developing friendly relations between Serbia and Albania, the president stated that "it was obvious that *it would take decades, if not centuries, for Albania to become a normal state which does not hate Serbs*".

The president connected this, as he called it, "mindless action" with the hate messages in the monastery Visoki Dečani and the fact that hundreds of Albanians from Kosovo and Metohija participated in terrorist actions in Iraq and Syria.

Example of a statement by a political actor 2: Discourse strategy "Albanians want to humiliate Serbs and destabilize Serbia"

In the text entitled "Vučić: A provocation with three goals"[8] published on the site of *B92* on the 15th of October 2014 combining the sources of two information agencies, *Beta* and *Tanjug* (as well as the statements for the daily paper *Večernje novosti*) it is said that

> The Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, stated that the incident at the football match between Serbia and Albania was the most intensive political provocation that had three goals.

The events at this football match were described in the narration as a "feast of Albanian extremists at the Partizan FC stadium". In the continuation the media quoted Prime Minister Vučić who said that "Albanians wanted to step on our pride".

Vučić made these comments without actually naming any names of the Albanian officials who watched the game:

> We kept our face and showed the gang of false Albanian officials in the VIP box the clear difference between us and them…

In the narrative part of the text it is further said that Vučić

> believes that *the intention was to humiliate the Serbian people, to cause long-term instability in Serbia* and in the Balkans and to influence the daily political circumstances in Serbia. Vučić said that he eagerly awaited the report of the European

[7]http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/sport.294.html:514944-Predsednik-Nikolic-Albanci-su-zeleli-nemire (Accessed 17 August 2015).

[8]http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2014&mm=10&dd=15&nav_id=911894 (Accessed 17 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

> Commission and that he would in no way 'accept the assessment of equal guilt' adding that Serbia would manage to prevent territorial pretensions.

"The intention of Albanian extremists was to portray Serbia as a country that cannot tolerate differences and to humiliate all its citizens", the Prime Minister said in the interview for the special edition of the daily *Večernje novosti*, which was then reported by *B92*.

Example of a statement by a political actor 3: Discourse strategy "You can't function with Albania"

Under the subheading "A diversion prepared for days" the same text reports the words of the President of the Assembly Committee for Kosovo and Metohija and governing Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka, SNS) MP *Milovan Drecun*, who said that the incident was "a well planned diversion prepared for days, with the official Tirana standing behind it".

> This sends a strong destabilizing message and the incidents in Kosovo, Vienna, Bujanovac have already shown that *Albania cannot accept to work with Serbia on the basis of prosperous cooperation among two good neighbors*, Drecun said.

He added that the responsibility of some officials in Serbia should be questioned since it was due to their intervention that Albanian supporters were allowed to come to the football match.

Example of a statement by a political actor 4: Discourse strategy "Albanian abuse of Serbian hospitality"

In the early hours of the 15th of October 2014, the site of the daily *Blic* reported the statement[9] of the Minister of External Affairs *Ivica Dačić*, who said "that the incident at the football match between Serbia and Albania was a deliberate and planned political provocation". Among other things, the chief Serbian diplomat claims that

> in this incident *an especially problematic fact is that it was carried out by the Albanian Prime Minister's brother, who should have been a guest here*. All this has added a political dimension to the entire event and turned it into a political provocation.

Example of a statement by a political actor 5: Discourse strategy "Albanian government supports the provocation of Serbia"

On the 16th of October 2014 the daily *Blic* reported the statements[10] of the Serbian Minister of Interior Affairs *Nebojša Stefanović*, who said that they found the drone which flew the flag of the so-called Great Albania over the stadium during the match between the national teams of Serbia and Albania and that the investigation indicated that it was the plan of the Albanian side to cause riots.

[9]http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Tema-Dana/502617/Dacic-Unapred-pripremljena-politicka-provokacija (Accessed 17 August 2015).

[10]http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Hronika/502960/Stefanovic-Pronadjen-dron-koji-je-nosio-zastavu-velike-Albanije (Accessed 17 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

> […] *The statements of the officials of the Albanian government indicate that they knew what kind of a provocation was being prepared, because they fully justified the behavior of all participants,*
>
> Stefanović said and stressed that
>
> if Albania believes that European values are the values of the so-called Great Albania, then Republic Serbia cannot share them in any way because they believe that Albania is not a state mature enough to join the European family.

"The Boomerang effect" 2 – reactions in Kosovo to the violence in Serbia

As reported by *RTS*, on the 26th of October 2014 in Kosovo Polje, a Molotov cocktail was thrown into two private shops owned by Serbs. The inhabitants of this town related these incidents to the events after the match between Serbia and Albania[11].

3. Conclusion

Serbia and Kosovo have become post-conflict societies, with a deficit in civil values and increased nationalist feelings that occasionally escalate into inter-ethnic violence. Research has indicated that there is a great support for an ethnically clean state especially amongst younger generations, who are intolerant towards members of other ethnic groups and religions, and are ready to exhibit behaviors which would induce conflict.

The political system of Serbia is a favorable setting for such a behavior because its constitution supports the existence of a titular nation, which is a problem already expressed in other transitional post-socialist states. Furthermore, the general population prefers religious values (religion in schools), political parties in Serbia rely on populist values, and local administrations do not respect the principles of a secular state.

Although one cannot prove a causal connection between reports in the media and the statements of political actors on one hand and violence in Kosovo in 2004 and in Vojvodina in 2014 on the other, the influence of the media on the surges of extreme violence is undoubtedly significant. A possible proof of the connection between the reports and violent actions is the fact that "waves of violence" in Kosovo (on the 17th and 18th of March 2004) and in Serbia (from the16th to the 23th of October 2014) happened after biased reports of the Kosovar media (on the 16th and the 17th of March 2014) and chauvinistic statements of leading Serbian politicians (on the 15th and the 16th of October 2014).

We differentiate between the discourse of the media coverage and the discourse of the statements of political actors. In the case of the March violence in Kosovo, the dominant strategies of media coverage create a biased picture that "Serbs in Kosovo are collectively responsible for the exile and death of Albanian children and that a violent protest against Serbs is justified". In case of the analysis of the statements of political (Albanian) actors from Kosovo, it can be concluded

[11] http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/135/Hronika/1733284/Kosovo+Polje,+ba%C4%8Den+Molotovljev+koktel.html (Accessed 17 August 2015).

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

that "international forces in Kosovo are not efficient and that Serbs can only be stopped with a violent response, which should also be a lesson for UNMIK".

In the case of the violence in Vojvodina in 2014, the dominant strategies created an impression that

> Albanians abused Serbian hospitality in Belgrade, that they wanted violence and wished to humiliate Serbs, in order to destabilize Serbia. The Albanian government supported this provocation of Serbia and Belgrade cannot cooperate either with uncivilized Albanians or with Albania.

We can conclude that the media reported on the tragedy in Kosovo in March 2004 in a biased way, which violated the seventh[12] point (out of nine) of the IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists (Declaration, 1986), while the political actors flared radical predispositions towards the Serbian community in Kosovo. After the "drone" affair in Serbia, the political actors used the type of discourse inappropriate for the highest officials of a country thus spreading chauvinistic attitudes towards Albanians and Albania.

The tragedy of the Albanian children in Kosovo and the provocation with the flag of "Great Albania" were triggering events that brought out frustration amongst a large number of citizens in Kosovo and in Serbia. However, the biased manner in which electronic media (mostly TV stations) reported on the event in Kosovo and the chauvinistic comments of leading Serbian officials additionally motivated individuals and mobilized masses of people, hundreds and thousands of them, to extremist activism which was manifested in very violent forms of inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence.

Under such circumstances ethnic nationalism escalated during those incidents in forms of verbal and physical violence along the following continuum: from nationalistic and chauvinistic statements, to radical insults and manifestations of extremism as a more severe form of violent conflict.

Those were the "waves" of extremist violence that lasted for several days: in Kosovo on the 16th and the 17th of March 2004 and in Serbia from the 16th to the 23rd of October 2014. In the protests with extremist actions in Kosovo in 2004 the community of Kosovar Serbs, their private property and religious buildings were under attack. When it comes to the incident at the football match in 2014 in Serbia and the incidents in Vojvodina, private property of Albanians and other Muslim communities was under attack. A large number of people either got killed or were injured while material damage was great.

Inter-ethnic and inter-religious extremist reactions can occur in one part of the Balkans and spread to other parts (Kosovo – Serbia, Serbia – Kosovo). In this manner "waves" of extremist violence mainly spread to neighboring countries, where the representatives of a minority in one country are a majority in the other. In both cases the surges of extremism were some form of "revenge" in the neighboring state, the "boomerang effect" for the exile of their nationals. In the case of the Kosovo events in March 2004 the violence echoed in Serbia for the next few days

[12] The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origins.

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

and started a kind of a reciprocal response, while in the case of the incident at the football match in 2014 there were disturbances of Kosovar Serbs in Kosovo.

Although there is no constant "visible" threat to the stability of democratic institutions and safety from extremist activism in Serbia and Kosovo, their citizens who belong to ethnic minorities have lived in fear in the last decade dreading sudden new surges of violence which accompany events on the daily political scene.

Bibliography

Coleman, Bartoli 2009: Peter T. Coleman, Andrea Bartoli, *Addressing Extremism*. New York: Columbia University–ICAR George Mason University.

Gashi 2004: Dardan Gashi, *The Role of the Media in the March 2004 Events in Kosovo*. (Report for Representative on Freedom of Media Miklos Haraszti). Vienna: OSCE.

Linc, Stepan 1998: Huan Linc, Alfred Stepan, *Demokratska tranzicija i konsolidacija: Južna Evropa, Južna Amerika i postkomunistička Evropa.* Beograd: Filip Višnjić.

Mijatović, Vujačić, Marinković 2008: Boško Mijatović, Ilija Vujačić, Tanasije Marinković, *Pojmovnik liberalne demokratije.* Beograd: Službeni glasnik–Centar za liberalno-demokratske studije.

Mimica, Bogdanović 2007: Aljoša Mimica, Marija Bogdanović (ed.). *Sociološki rečnik*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike.

Tadić 1996: Ljubomir Tadić, *Politikološki leksikon*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva.

Thompson, Kuntz 2006: Mark R. Thompson, Philip Kuntz, "Stolen elections and the 'October revolution' in Serbia", in: Thompson M. R., *Democratic Revolutions: Asia and Eastern Europe*, (London-New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group), p. 84–97.

Varga 2013: Boris Varga, *Od „šarenih revolucija" do Anonimusa – „popravljanje" demokratije i novi autoritarizam*. Novi Sad: Vojvođanska politikološka asocijacija.

Vekarić 2011: Brino Vekarić (ed.). *Reči i nedela – pozivanje ili podsticanje na ratne zločine u medijima u Srbiji 1991–1992*. Beograd: Centar za tranzicione procese.

Documents

Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalism. 1986. International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists – IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress
URL: http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/ifj-code-of-principles.

Indictment against Vojislav Šešelj. International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia IT-03-67, filed on 7 December 2007.

Registration of people displaced from Kosovo and Metohija. UNHCR, Commissariat for Refugees of Republic Serbia, Humanitarian Office of European Community, 2000.

United Nation Security Council. Resolution 1199, Adopted by the UN SC at its 3930th meeting, on 23 September 1998,
URL: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1199(1998)

Constitution of Republic Serbia. Office for Cooperation with the Media of the Government of Republic Serbia, October 2006, Chapter 1, p. 3.

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)

Abstract

The authors analyze the relationship between media coverage and statements by political actors on the one hand and an extremist "wave of violence" that erupted in Kosovo (2004) and Serbia (2014) on the other. Using an interdisciplinary method of combining media discourse and political science, authors conclude that the messages in the media and statements by political actors have contributed to fueling the extremist violence in Kosovo and Serbia, which is an obstacle to establishing the stability and lasting peace in the region.

BDD-A27678 © 2017 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 01:00:53 UTC)