CONSTRUCTING REALITIES ON WAR IN PRINT MEDIA DISCOURSE

IGOR LAKIĆ[1]

Abstract. The paper deals with an analysis of the reporting of two Montenegrin daily newspapers (Pobjeda and Dan) on NATO airstrikes on Yugoslavia in 1999, an event that still has a huge impact on the political scene of Montenegro. The analysis was based on van Dijk's theory on news schemata and Fairclough's and van Dijk's approaches to critical discourse analysis. The analysis has shown that the two analysed dailies, due to their different political and ideological orientations, created two different 'realities' of the same event, using different strategies in the text structure at the macro level, the selection of lexical and syntactic elements at the micro level and in the interpretation of events. This type of reporting has had a negative impact on the political scene of Montenegro on both the decisions made on the independence of the country in 2006 and the support for the NATO membership of Montenegro.

Key words: print media, war, macrostructures, microstructures, critical discourse analysis, intertextual analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The language used in the media can be a result of the political orientations of the media or journalists, the influence of governments, political parties or media owners, the prevailing beliefs of the society and so on. On the other hand, that same language can influence society. Fairclough (1996: 309) claims that language is a mode of action situated socially and historically and that this relationship is dialectical, meaning that "it is socially shaped, but is also socially shaping – or socially constitutive". According to him, language use constitutes (1) social identities, (2) social relations, and (3) systems of knowledge and belief, i.e. representations, which is the case with influencing readers, their perceptions and beliefs as well as creating public opinion.

Wodak and Busch (2004: 106) propose that "media texts are perceived as dialogic and the readings depend on the receivers and on the settings". According to them, readers/listeners/viewers interact with the media and interpret and understand them in specific subjective ways. This is especially true in times of crisis, such as war, where access to information is limited and controlled to an extent. In such situations, readers have limited information, which is usually selected for them, and can therefore rely only on what is offered. This certainly reduces the readers' ability to fully comprehend the situation, so

[1] Faculty of Philology, University of Montenegro, igorlakic24@gmail.com.

RRL, **LXIV**, *1*, p. 99–111, Bucureşti, 2019

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

they perceive it only through the lenses of the media that they have at their disposal. As the media tend to be subjective, the perception of readers or listeners/viewers turns out to be subjective too. This opens the possibility to those in power of manipulating the population in many different ways by creating a "reality" in accordance with their own needs and interests.

Lau et al. (2011: 7) say that "... the media – as instruments of hegemony and vehicles manufacturing consent – and not only constructs reality, they also define, create and shape reality". It is therefore interesting to see how the ideologies behind the media appeal to readers and help to legitimize their views and themes.

The purpose of this paper is to look into the way in which the media (including the political powers standing behind them) influence their readers. This will be illustrated through examples of the reporting of two Montenegrin dailies (*Pobjeda* and *Dan*) on NATO airstrikes on former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) that Montenegro was a constitutive part of. Although this event took place in 1999, its consequences are still evident in the lives of people and especially in their political views, often based on emotions, regarding the Montenegrin membership to NATO, among other things. I will try to show how the airstrikes were covered by the media, depending on their political orientation, and how they influenced their readers' views and opinions on the warring sides.

I will first offer some basic information on the event and the dailies analyzed. The paper will then focus on the theoretical grounds for the analysis, followed by a short description of the methodology used. The next chapter provides an analysis of some aspects of the reporting of the selected dailies, taking into consideration the macro and micro structure of the texts and an intertextual analysis. The discussion chapter deals with some observations arising from the analysis. The last chapter contains concluding remarks.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On March 22, 1999, the NATO Council authorised the then Secretary General Javier Solana to give the order to start airstrikes against former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of two Republics – Serbia and Montenegro) which included Kosovo, formally an autonomous province of Serbia at the time. The strikes started on March 24, 1999 and lasted until NATO and Yugoslavia signed an agreement on withdrawal of the Yugoslav troops from Kosovo on June 9, 1999. The UN Security Council had never approved of the strikes, but on June 10 it did approve the peace agreement between NATO and Yugoslavia, which led to the withdrawal of the Yugoslav forces from Kosovo. This marked the end of the war, although NATO officially announced the end of its military operations on June 20 (Geoff 1999: 537–548).

The relations of Serbia with its then province of Kosovo had deteriorated long before the airstrikes started. The alleged oppression of Kosovo, conducted by the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities, caused an insurgency of Kosovar Albanians against the authorities in Belgrade. The Kosovo Liberation Army had been established in 1996 and clashes between the two sides broke out in early 1998. A ceasefire was signed on October 15, 1998 but it was broken by both sides after two months and the fighting resumed. The killing of 45 Kosovar Albanians took place in January 1999, which made NATO decide to introduce a peacekeeping force to restrain the two sides. In addition, Yugoslavia refused to accept an

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

external peacekeeping force after the Rambouillet Accords broke down on 23 March, which made NATO decide to "attempt to bomb Serbia into respecting human rights and accepting a peace settlement" (Geoff 1999: 13).

Montenegro, as a part of the federal state, remained neutral in this conflict, although installations of the Yugoslav army in Montenegro were bombed, with some targets missed, causing collateral damage and civilian casualties. That was the time of a strong division of the Montenegrin population as to the future of the Republic, i.e. whether it should remain in a state union with Serbia or become an independent state again, as it had been before joining Yugoslavia in 1918. The Montenegrin authorities did not recognize Milošević as the Federal President, since he had tried to overthrow the Montenegrin authorities and take full control over the Republic. This provoked serious tensions in Montenegro during the airstrikes between the Yugoslav Army controlled by Milošević and the Montenegrin Police loyal to the Montenegrin Government, which were on the verge of conflict. Montenegro was thus faced with both the NATO airstrikes and the threat from Milošević's regime, although the latter was much more serious. This was not covered much by the Western media as their focus was mainly on Kosovo and Serbia, although a lot of foreign journalists were stationed in Montenegro, after being expelled from Serbia or not being able to enter it.

3. MONTENEGRIN DAILIES

The division in the Montenegrin population was also reflected in the media. Those in favour of a federal state with Serbia who supported the Belgrade regime were strongly against the airstrikes and their views were best expressed by the daily *Dan*, a pro-Serb newspaper published in Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, but edited at the time in Belgrade, in accordance with Serbian legislation.

The part of the population that wanted independence for Montenegro read the state daily *Pobjeda*, controlled by the Montenegro authorities, or the daily *Vijesti*, which was quite neutral. Being exposed to the NATO bombing, this part of the population did not approve of the airstrikes either, but politically they were still Western-oriented.

Although *Vijesti* was also analysed, for the purpose of this paper I will focus on *Dan* and *Pobjeda* only, as they best reflect the underlying idea of the influence of the media and the powers standing behind them on their readers.

4. Theoretical basis

In the analysis of the news reporting on NATO airstrikes on Yugoslavia I started from the assumption that a pure linguistic approach to the discourse of the media would be inadequate without critical discourse analysis. My approach is based on (1) van Dijk's theory on schematic superstructures or news schemata (van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b; Bell, 1994), and (b) critical discourse analysis (Fairclough1995a, 1995b,1996; van Dijk 2001).

Van Dijk's notions on macrostructures and microstructures were used as a starting point in the analysis (van Dijk 1988a). Microstructures refer to the linguistic aspects below discourse (e.g. words, phrases, clauses, cohesion, coherence and so on) that certainly contribute to building up discourse and point to its functional units, or macrostructures.

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

Macrostructures are semantic units covering specific topics around which information is organised. Based on the models of van Dijk (1988a, 1988b), Bell (1994) and Zoltán (2001) of the structure of news in print media, I derived the following model[2] for the purpose of my own research:

1. *Headline*
2. *Lead* (summarising the main event)
3. *Main Event* (elaboration of the news mentioned in the lead)
4. *Background to the Event* (who, how, where and when?)
5. *Verbal Comments* (of the most important participants in the event)
6. *Evaluation* (attitudes, expectations and evaluation of the event by journalists)
7. *Results of the Event* (why the event is important and how serious its consequences are).

The *Headline* is a compulsory element in each news text. It is often the case with the *Lead*, but not necessarily. These two parts serve as an introduction to the news story, the *Lead* being a summary and the *Headline* a "summary of the summary". In the Montenegrin dailies, however, it is possible to find a *Lead-in*, placed above the *Headline*. Together with the *Headline* and *Lead*, the *Lead-in* provides quite a detailed summary of the text in the analysed dailies.

The *Main Event(s)* is the central part of a news story. The professional practice in creating news defines that information is not given in chronological order, as is the case with other narratives such as fairy tales. In a news story the latest and most important news is put at the beginning of an article.

The *Background to the Event* usually appears after the paragraphs describing the main event. It provides the history of the event and its context. This refers to participants in the event, the time and place of the event as well as the initial situation that led to the event (Who, How, When, Where?).

Verbal Reactions are rather inevitable ingredients of each news story, but are not an obligatory part of the text. These are the comments of the most important participants in the event that should contribute to an unbiased approach to reporting, although it is not always the case. For example, the choice of participants or positioning of their comments in the text may point to a lack of objectivity.

The *Results of the Event* is another category characteristic of news discourse, but it is not a compulsory one. Still, in many situations the seriousness of consequences of an event makes the event interesting for the media to the extent that sometimes the consequences are more important than the event itself. In this case they may even be put in the headline.

The *Evaluation* as a part of the macrostructure enables journalists to express their own opinions or attitudes about the event, or to offer their own evaluation of the topic. This category appears quite frequently in newspaper articles and is important because it gives a meaning to the story and contributes to its coherence. However, *Evaluation* may be a good area for manipulation (Lakić, 2004, 2011).

Van Dijk (1988b: 29) says that "discourse analysis does more than just describe textual structure" and that "discourse is not just text but also a form of interaction". This is

[2] This model was applied in an analysis of British dailies and was later used in the analysis of Montenegrin daily newspapers.

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

where critical discourse analysis can help, as it goes beyond pure linguistic analysis. Its purpose is to use linguistic findings in order to interpret events in a certain way, taking into consideration social and other indicators that lie outside linguistics. This approach is also known as *socio-political discourse analysis* (van Dijk 2001: 300).

Fairclough (1996: 311–313) says that analysis includes three dimensions: text, discourse practice and social practice. *Text analysis* offers the formal characteristics of texts including both form and meaning – vocabulary, semantics, syntax as well as cohesion, discourse markers and other units that contribute to the organization of texts above the sentence. *Discourse practice* (or *discursive practice*) deals with the production and consumption of the discourse under study. This refers to institutional practices such as editorial procedures. At a time of constant and quick changes in our societies, the media, whose role is important in those processes, undergo changes themselves, including their discourse practices. The third dimension, *social practice*, refers to the analysis of economic, political and cultural events, such as the study of the political context of events and how ideology influences and contributes to social changes. This allows linguists to place any text in a certain social context. Social practice, however, does not have a direct impact on texts but rather an indirect one, since discourse practice serves as a link through which aspects of social practice are reflected in the texts.

Fairclough (1996: 314–15) also deals with linguistic analysis vs. intertextual analysis of texts. According to him, linguistic analysis is more descriptive in nature, while intertextual analysis is more interpretative, as it lies on the border between text and discourse practice. Linguistic analysis provides evidence while intertextual analysis interprets the evidence. Fairclough claims that it is necessary to connect linguistic analysis and intertextual analysis in order to overcome the gap between text on the one hand and society and culture on the other.

In his approach to critical discourse analysis, Van Dijk (2001: 300–301) focuses on "the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance", defining dominance as the social power exercised by elites, institutions or groups, which leads to inequality. Van Dijk further defines that the purpose of critical discourse analysts is to identify "what structures, strategies or other properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction". In addition, he looks into the relationship between society, discourse and social cognition. He believes that it is important to examine the role of social representations in the minds of social actors in order to make a link between discourse and society.

In this process, language certainly has an important role. Lau *et al.* (2011: 9–7) say: "Central to the notion of power and politics is the role of language that is used to shape, sustain, alter, or legitimate particular views. In unpacking the relations between power, discourse, inequality, and dominance, critical discourse analysis is key to uncovering how conflicts are represented in the media."

According to them (Lau *et al.* 2011: 10) discourses influence the way of thinking and creating meaning through offering truth claims and interpretations of the world as well as versions of reality and opinions that the readers should adopt. Through language, discourses "make it possible to construct a topic in a certain way and also limit other ways in which the topic can be constructed." Thus, those in power have control which "may limit freedom of action of others but also influence their minds" (Van Dijk 2001: 302).

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

The media are often in a position of power, especially in the Balkans, where they are controlled by persons in power, (e.g. politicians, tycoons and the like). For them, the media represent a way of influencing, managing and changing people's minds, which is often a form of abuse of power. Being controlled by those in power, the media resort to discursive practices that will best convey the information desirable to those that fund and stand behind them. Fairclough &Wodak (1997: 258) notice: "Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people".

In our analysis, discursive practices, which also include the editorial policies of the media, had a huge impact on most of the Montenegrin population which was directly influenced by the war and consequently the media that reported on it.

5. METHODOLOGY

The research on the reporting of print media on NATO airstrikes on former Yugoslavia was quite extensive and included analysis of all the issues of three British dailies (*the Guardian*, *the Independent* and *the Times*) and three Montenegrin dailies (*Pobjeda*, *Vijesti* and *Dan*) from March 22 to June 10, 1999. The total number of articles read was about five thousand. The focus of the analysis was on news stories, although some other aspects were separately analysed when necessary (e.g. cover page, photographs, comments and so on).

The articles were classified according to topic and the most frequent topics were then analysed in detail. The main topics include, among others, war operations, the refugee crisis, the situation in Serbia, the situation in Montenegro and collateral damage, but the latter three contain a number of subtopics that were also analysed separately.

The analysis was first focused on identifying the macrostructure of the news articles, which produced the model presented above. Linguistic exponents of the parts of the macrostructure at the micro level were then identified, primarily lexical and syntactic ones. This also included discourse markers that also point to the functional units of the macrostructures.

Based on the linguistic findings, an intertextual analysis was conducted, bearing in mind the principles of critical discourse analysis presented in the section on theoretical grounds. The analysis clearly showed that linguistic data were necessary in order to interpret the texts in an objective way. Some aspects of that analysis are presented in this paper.

6. ANALYSIS

The focus of the analysis here are two Montenegrin dailies – *Pobjeda* and *Dan*. The reporting of the two dailies differed as they exhibit two different political orientations. This was reflected largely in the topics they covered and the terminology used, as well as in some other aspects. Still, the thing they have in common is certainly an effort to present the "truth" that the political and military powers wanted them to present. This resulted in a

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

clear editorial policy on the part of the papers, while the views of journalists were completely excluded. Each paper will be dealt with separately.

6.1. "Pobjeda"

Pobjeda is the longest running newspaper in Montenegro. Its first issue was published in 1944, at the end of War World II, as a state newspaper, and until the late 1990s it was the only daily in Montenegro. It has always been a close follower of the ruling structures in Montenegro and that was the case during the NATO airstrikes too.

6.1.1. Macro and micro structures

In terms of macrostructure, it is obvious that the *Main Event* is present to a large extent in the texts, but mainly in combination with *Verbal Comments*. Actually, journalists use *Verbal Comments* very often to introduce the *Main Event*. It is interesting that in some cases the whole text is composed of *Verbal Comments*.

It can also be noted that the *Lead-in*, *Headline* and *Lead* contain a large amount of information that is then repeated in the first passages of the text. Owing to their length, these three parts of the macrostructure look like a detailed summary of the text, with full predication in the *Headline* and lengthy sentences in the *Lead*. In a way, these three parts act as a text within a text so that quite often no new information is later provided in the article.

In addition, *Verbal Comments* can be found within the *Headline* and *Lead*, which means that the journalists themselves resorted to hedging, probably to avoid personal involvement in the story. This resulted in the rare presence of *Evaluation*.

Background to the Event is present, but mainly in the situations when the paper avoided reporting on certain events for period of as long as several days. When they did finally inform their readership about the event, which was usually when the situation escalated, they were forced to write about it, but that implied quite a large quantity of information that had been missed, in order to provide a clearer description of the situation.

On the microlevel there are not many elements that could be associated with this daily. The language used is very neutral. For example, *Pobjeda* used neutral terminology, such as ***NATO forces*** (*NATO snage*), ***airstrikes*** (*vazdušni udari*) and the like. Being a state daily controlled by the ruling coalition which opted for neutrality, *Pobjeda* referred to Milošević neutrally as the ***President of FRY*** (*predsjednik SRJ*), although he was not recognised as the President by the Montenegrin authorities. In addition, the paper avoided the modifier ***so-called*** (*takozvani*) before FRY, which was used by the Montenegrin authorities.

As a result, negative terminology can be found within *Verbal Comments* only, so it cannot be attributed to this daily. The Yugoslav army representatives use a pejorative term for the Albanian population (*šiptarsko stanovništvo*), while some news agenices, such as *Beta* from Serbia, use the noun phrase ***aggressor planes*** (*agresorski avioni*) or adjective ***separatist*** (*separatistički*) for Kosovo. *Verbal Comments* inlude positive language elements when referring to citizens or the Yugoslav Army. Noun phrases the **citizens's morale** (*moral građana*) and ***resistance to the NATO aggressor*** (*otpor NATO agresoru*) are used frequently. The adjective ***patriotic*** (*patriotrski*) and the prepositional phrase ***in defence of***

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

the homeland (*na braniku otadžbine*) also appear frequently within *Verbal Comments*, mainly in the statements related to the Yugoslav Army. On the other hand, the statements of the Montenegrin authorities include nouns such as ***peace*** (*mir*), ***harmony*** (*sloga*), ***restraint*** (*uzdržanost*), ***wisdom*** (*mudrost*), ***responsibility*** (*odgovornost*) and ***tolerance*** (*tolerancija*), as well as noun phrases such as ***presence of mind*** (*prisebnost*) and ***maintainance of civil peace*** (*očuvanje građanskog mira*). However, when the authorities speak about the Yugoslav Army, they use the noun ***destabilisation*** (*destabilizacija*) quite a lot.

6.1.2. Intertextual analysis

War events are not easy to follow in *Pobjeda* as there is no clear concept of presenting the news. Thus, information about bombardments is sometimes found on the first and sometimes on the fifth page. It does not mean, of course, that the airstrikes were neglected, indeed the opposite is true. However, it is evident that all the important activities of the Montenegrin authorities and officials were published on the first page, in the form of large headlines, while the next pages contained the texts on these activities. This proves that this daily reported in accordance with its status as a state daily. Special attention was paid to President Đukanović, Prime Minister Vujanović and President of the Parliament Marović, who all came from the ruling party.

It can be noticed that *Pobjeda* paid a lot of attention to the issue of refugees from Kosovo who came to Montenegro, but those texts again contain a lot of *Verbal comments* from Montenegrin officials, the Commissioner for Refugees Šćepanović and Deputy Prime Minister Burzan, expressing the commitment of the authorities to resolving their status.

As for the situation in Serbia, news was scarce, except for information on war operations and the activities of FRY President Milošević. Bearing in mind that *Pobjeda* was a state daily, following instructions from the ruling coalition that opposed the Serbian regime and FRY authorities and proclaimed the neutrality of Montenegro in this way, such a neutral editorial policy could be expected.

It is possible to conclude that the paper fully avoided explicit *Evaluation*, so the text at first sight looks neutral and objective. On the other hand, some topics were dealt with more than others (e.g. the activities of the Montenegrin authorities), while some appeared either occasionally (the effort to destabilize Montenegro) or rarely (news from Serbia, excluding Milošević and the protests against the airstrikes). This implies that *Pobjeda* was somewhat biased, when considering the quantity of information on some topics and their frequency. Thus, the topics that were positive for the Montenegrin authorities were present much more that the "negative" ones. It is thus possible to claim that *Evaluation* in *Pobjeda* was present, but in a hidden or implicit way.

Since the Montenegrin authorities did not recognise the federal authorities, FRY Prime Minister Bulatović (a Montenegrin and their former party leader) and his government were completely neglected. The fact that they did report on Milošević was probably a result of the fact that he was seen as an important participant in the war, the person who was crucial to the outbreak of the war and who had the solution in his hands. Thus, Milošević was partly presented as a negative figure, but in an implicit way.

Pobjeda also tried to strike a balance between the decision on neutrality, which in turn implied a very moderate attitude to the NATO Alliance, and the protests against the airstrikes. This may have been considered "appropriate" for the official daily of the state that was being bombarded.

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

6.2. "Dan"

The first issue of *Dan* was published in early 1998, which is just over a year before the airstrikes started. Before Montenegrin independence (2006) it supported the idea of a joint state with Serbia, with a strong element of Serbian patriotism and even nationalism in its reporting. Since 2006 it has gradually changed its policy by becoming a critic of the Montenegrin authorities, while it has still remained a pro-Serb daily, but now adopting a much milder rhetoric. However, its reporting in 1999 was fully in compliance with the editorial policy of Serbian newspapers controlled by Slobodan Milšević and represented a model of war propaganda.

6.2.1. Macro and micro structures

Just like in *Pobjeda*, it is possible to notice in *Dan* an extensive presence of *Lead-in*, which, together with the *Headline* and *Lead*, makes a short text in itself, practically a summary of the whole text. The link between *Lead-in* and *Headline* is especially important, because the *Headline* would be incomplete and very often unclear without the *Lead-in*.

In addition, most of the analysed texts consist of *Verbal Comments*. This part of the macrostructure is embedded in the *Headline*, the *Lead*, the *Main Event* and sometimes even in the *Background to the Event*, which makes it a prevailing element in the texts published in *Dan*. The *Background to the Event* is present in the texts to an extent, but *Results of the Event* hardly appears at all.

On the other hand, *Evaluation* is present to a large degree, either implicitly or explicitly, and is especially visible through the use of the microstructure elements characteristic of the Serbian media. It is present within the *Headline* and *Lead*, but also in the body of texts. The strong presence of *Evaluation* is one of the characteristics of *Dan* that distinguishes it from *Pobjeda*, where it appears very rarely and indirectly.

This presence of *Evaluation* has certainly contributed to the choice of language elements at the micro level, so it is much more interesting than that found in *Pobjeda*. The used elements on the micro level are fully in accordance with the position of this daily that supported the policy of Slobodan Milošević and that was consequently very negative towards the Alliance.

The most frequent nouns are ***aggression*** (*agresija*) and ***aggressor*** (*agresor*), for example in the noun phrase ***aviation of the NATO aggressor*** (*avijacija NATO agresora*). Aggressor as a modifier is present in the noun phrases ***aggressor forces*** (*agresorske snage*) and ***aggressor NATO aviation*** (*agresorska NATO avijacija*).

There are several frequent adjectives that refer to NATO: (1) ***wicked*** (*zločinački*) that appears in noun phrases such as ***wicked agression*** (zločinačka agresija, ***wicked attacks*** (*zločinački napadi*); (2) ***criminal*** (*kriminalni*) in the phrases ***criminal act*** (*kriminalni akt*) and ***criminal goals*** (*kriminalni ciljevi*); (3) ***evil*** (*zlikovački)* as in ***evil NATO bombers*** (*zlikovački NATO bombarderi*); (4) ***hostile*** (*neprijateljski*) in the noun phrases ***hostile planes*** (*neprijateljski avion*) and ***hostile NATO aviation*** (*neprijateljska NATO avijacija*); and (5) ***brutal*** (*brutalni*) in the noun phrase ***brutal aggression against FRY*** (*brutalna agresijana SR Jugoslaviju*).

This image of NATO is contrasted with the description of the Yugoslav army whose actions are labelled as***efficient*** (*efikasan*) and ***powerful*** (*snažan*) and which ***inflicts heavy losses*** (*nanosi značajne gubitke*), despite that fact that it was an ***unequal battle in the air***

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

(*neravnopravna vazdušna borba*). Using these noun phrases, *Dan* suggested that the Yugoslav Army was successful despite the supremacy of the Alliance, although it was difficult to prove any success on the part of the Yugoslav Army.

In addition, verb phrases are used in reporting on Yugoslav activities. Thus, Yugoslavia ***wages a just war*** (*void pravednu borbu*), ***defends freedom and national dignity*** (*brani slobodu* i *nacionalno dostojanstvo*) or ***puts up resistance*** (*pruža otpor*). Citizens who protest in the rallies against the NATO airstrikes are ***patriotically oriented citizens*** (*patriotski opredijeljeni građani*)**.** *Dan* uses the noun ***homeland*** (*otadžbina*) instead of ***country*** (*zemlja*) or ***state*** (*država*), such as in the clause ***we defend our homeland*** (*branimo svoju otadžbinu*).

On the other hand, Montenegrin neutrality is refered to as ***shameful*** (*sramna*) and ***unconstitutional*** (*neustavna*). As for Kosovo, the noun phrases ***Albanian terrorists*** (*albanski teroristi*) and ***Albanian terrorist gangs*** (*albanske terorističke bande*) are used. These examples show that *Dan* provided a pretty black-and-white image of the warring sides.

6.2.2. Intertextual analysis

The reporting of this daily was obviously for war purposes from the very beginning. Most of the rubrics in the paper were labeled ***In defence of the homeland*** (*U odbranu otadžbine*), which shows that *Dan* was fully committed to war reporting. Pages covering all sorts of news, such as the activities of the local authorities, as well as those on the prices of meat products, discounts for retired people, the work of the municipal police, sports and others were published under this heading.

Dan also published official statements from the country and abroad, mostly those from Russia and Ukraine, the individual opinions of politicians and well-known people, as well as reports by foreign media that did not support the airstrikes. This also includes statements issued by completely unknown associations.

However, *Dan* reported on the events in Montenegro very rarely, so that the picture created by this daily did not reflect the real situation. For example, their was almost no information about the refugees who came from Kosovo to Montenegro, although this was one of the main topics during the airstrikes both at the international and the local level. In addition, there were only hints of the conflict between the Yugoslav Army and the Montenegrin Police.

The Montenegrin authorities, especially Prime Minister Đukanović, were mentioned very rarely and always in a negative context, while there activities were hardly ever covered. On the other hand, the paper regularly reported on the activities of Slobodan Milošević, federal and military officials, pro-Serb political parties in Montenegro and priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The number of texts and amount of information from Serbia was much larger than those from Montenegro. Obviously, many topics from Montenegro were neglected, which confirms the claims that *Dan* was actually edited in Belgrade.

What is quite strange, though, is that the reports on NATO airstrikes were not very numerous, especially in the first ten days. This can be interpreted as an effort to alleviate the negative consequences of the NATO airstrikes, in order to avoid a negative impression of its supremacy over the Yugoslav Army, the number of casualties and the amount of destruction of different buildings and facilities throughout the country. Therefore, the daily obviously wanted to avert attention from the airstrikes and move it towards criticism of the Alliance.

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

However, *Dan* reported extensively on the successes of the Yugoslav Army, such as on the shooting down of the American Stealth Bomber, while at the same time including a lot of photographs with ironic captions. A similar practice was used for other events. They reported on the results of NATO strikes only when they caused casualties and on their misses and collateral damage.

It is strange that there was a relative lack of reports on NATO activities, although that was the best evidence that the daily could use against the airstrikes, especially in relation to casualties and collateral damage.

Special pages in this daily were dedicated to the poetry of both famous and unknown poets and ordinary citizens, mainly of a patriotic nature. Some of these poems openly invited people to go and die for the homeland. This is further proof that the editorial policy of *Dan* was somewhat inconsistent and very often not in line with the real situation. On the other hand, it seems that it was fully in compliance with the interests of Belgrade authorities.

7. DISCUSSION

The two dailies have some similarities regarding their macrostructure. Thus, *Lead-in*, *Headline* and *Lead* represent the three parts that provide quite an extensive summary of the article, with predication in the *Headline*. In addition, the *Headline* arises from the *Lead-in* and would often be unclear without it.

Verbal Comments are also very widely used in texts and are often embedded into other parts of the macrostructure. Very often, this strategy seems to be used as a hedging device, in order to avoid the direct involvement of the journalist in the claims expressed in the text. In addition, the selection of the people whose *Verbal Comments* are presented and their positioning in the first or the last paragraphs of the text may point to the attitude of the newspaper towards the political positions of these people and this strategy therefore represents an implicit *Evaluation*.

While *Evaluation* is not found explicitly in most articles from *Pobjeda*, its implicit presence is reflected in the way the paper avoided reporting on some events, as the editors, or the powers standing behind them, found them inappropriate to their own interests. However, when they finally did publish them, due to their importance or escalation, the paper resorted to the *Background to the Event* in order to present the necessary facts to their readers so that they could grasp all the aspects of the event.

On the other hand, *Evaluation* in *Dan* distinguishes this paper from most of the press in Montenegro at the time. In addition, *Evaluation* in *Dan* is much more explicit, which is supported by the words and phrases at the micro level that convey a negative picture of the NATO Alliance. Such language elements are not used by *Pobjeda*, except in the *Verbal Comments* of the Yugoslav representatives, but these cannot be attributed to the editorial policy of this daily.

So, what kind of realities did the two papers create for their readers?

Obviously, *Pobjeda* and *Dan* presented the same war in two different ways. Bearing in mind Fairclough's (1996: 309) claim that the media language is socially shaped, but that it is also socially shaping, it is possible to conclude that the two dailies shaped two different realities for their respective readers. This created a specific split in the society regarding the necessity of the airstrikes, but this split has remained until now on numerous occasions and

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

in various ways. For example, it was very much visible during the campaigns for or against independence in 2006 or in 2017, when Montenegro was invited to take up NATO membership. This proves the power the media may have in shaping society, but also the extent to which they are shaped by society, or rather the "elites" that are a powerful part of the society.

Thus, based on *Pobjeda's* reporting, its readers could conclude that the airstrikes were obviously necessary to stop the federal President and the Yugoslav Army from evicting Albanians from Kosovo and killing them. The federal authorities and Milošević especially were seen as the main culprits that provoked NATO into undertaking the airstrikes in order to protect innocent people. This resulted in an exodus of Albanians from Kosovo, and Montenegro was one of the countries that was ready to provide them a refuge. Compared to the federal authorities, the Montenegrin authorities led the policy of neutrality and tolerance and tried to preserve peace, in a situation when the Yugoslav Army wanted to destabilize Montenegro, remove its authorities from power and enable Milošević to take full control of the Republic.

On the other hand, *Dan* saw Milošević, the federal authorities and the Yugoslav Army as entities fighting for a just cause and trying to keep Kosovo within Serbia, as a "cradle" of its national pride, history and culture. NATO was seen as an evil, hostile and criminal aggressor, while the Montenegrin authorities were depicted as virtual traitors as they did not take Serbia's side. The conflict between the Yugoslav Army and the Montenegrin Police was not seen as serious and was reduced to the level of a minor disagreement. According to *Dan*, there were some refugees from Kosovo, but this was not a serious issue either. The casualties were not numerous, owing to the successes of the Yugoslav Army on the battlefield. Such a force could defeat even NATO, which was proved by shooting down of the "invincible" Stealth Bomber.

In the reporting of the two dailies, published in the same country which was exposed to the airstrikes, "us" and "them" were completely different entities, depending on the political orientations of these newspapers and the powers standing behind them. As is usually the case in wars, the truth was a victim in both cases and could be probably found somewhere in between.

8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the two Montenegrin dailies, *Pobjeda* and *Dan*, showed that different political and ideological backgrounds create different patterns of reporting and different perceptions of reality. Readers are exposed to and live in different ideological, political, cultural and discourse worlds, although their physical environment (context) is the same. This is especially characteristic of times and areas of crises, including wars.

The war and crisis "truths" are always questionable and should not be taken for granted. However, in the situation of limited access to information, this is hard to avoid, so readers, listeners and viewers often live in a society shaped by the media, which sometimes even borders on illusion. Such tendencies lead to or incite divisions in societies, and these divisions give grounds to those in power, governments, political parties or elites to pursue their individual goals at the expanse of states and their citizens. A lot of these goals are achieved through the media. My analysis has shown that such a situation can be avoided

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

partly by being exposed to different sources of information, as individual media are not the only guardians of truth.

REFERENCES

Bell, A., 1994, *The Language of News Media*, Oxford, Blackwell.
Fairclough, N., 1995a, *Media Discours*, London, Edward Arnold.
Fairclough, N., 1995b, *Critical Discourse Analysis, the Critical Study of Language*, New York, Longman.
Fairclough, N., 1996, "Critical Analysis of Media Discourse", in: P. Marris, S. Thorntam (eds), *Media Studies: A Reader*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 308–325.
Fairclough, N., R. Wodak, 1997, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in: T. Van Dijk(ed.) *Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, London, Sage, 258–284.
Geoff, P. (ed.), 1999, *The Kosovo News and Propaganda War*, Vienna, International Press Institute.
Lakić, I., 2004, "Media Discourse and Manipulation", in: S. Perović, V. Bulatović (eds), *Lingvističke analize*, Podgorica: Institut za straneje jezike, 85–96.
Lakić, I., 2011, *Diskurs, mediji, rat*, Podgorica, Univerzitet Crne Gore, Institut zastrane jezike.
Lau, U., Seedat, M. and Mc Ritchie, V., 2011, "Discursive Constructions of the Israel-Hezbollah War: The Strugglefor Representation", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 28, 2, 1–33.
Van Dijk, T., 1988a, *News Analysis*, Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.
Van Dijk, T., 1988b, *News as Discourse*.Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.
Van Dijk, T., 2001, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis", in: M. Wetherel, S. Taylor, S. J. Yates (eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice, A Reader*, London, SAGE Publications,300–317.
Wodak, R., B. Busch, 2004, "Approaches to Media Texts", in: J. D. H. Downing (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Media Studies*, London, Sage, 105–123.
Zoltán, K., 2001, "Media Discourse from a Contrastive Rhetoric Perspective", *Novelty*, 8, 3, 4–26.

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)

BDD-A29184 © 2019 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 18.97.9.169 (2026-09-09 01:28:49 UTC)