



# Croatian journalists' narratives on Croatian war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Karmen Erjavec and Zala Volcic **2**

**Abstract:** The former Yugoslav wars of 1990s have proven to be one of the most violent and aggressive military conflicts after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in Europe. One of the wars in the former Yugoslav region took place between Croats and Bosnian Muslims (1992-1994). The causes for war and war itself are still being denied by the majority of Croats despite evidence from Croatian historians and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. Because the media have played a crucial role in the construction of the ethnic "Other" (*the enemy*), we've interviewed Croatian journalists to understand how they understand, explain and justify the war crimes committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The study shows that Croatian journalists appropriated "war on terrorism", "Iraqi war", "European" and "neo-liberal" discourses according to their own socio-historical framework to justify a particular ideology (in this case, the nationalistic ideology of a "Greater Croatia") and a particular practice (the war crimes against the Bosnian Muslims).

**Key terms:** *media, journalists, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, critical discourse analysis, military struggles*

**1** **Karmen Erjavec** is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she teaches Mass Communication, Media and Minorities and Media Education. [karmen.erjavec@fdv.uni-lj.si](mailto:karmen.erjavec@fdv.uni-lj.si)

**Zala Volcic** is a Lecturer of Communication at the School of Journalism and Communication, University of Queensland, Australia. [z.volcic@uq.edu.au](mailto:z.volcic@uq.edu.au)

The majority of researchers that analyze the after-wars peace-processes in former Yugoslavia share an agreement (eg. Bilandzic, 2006; Galtung, 2002; Kurspahic, 2003; Lampe, 1996; MacDonald, 2002; Samary, 1995; Woodward, 1995) that the Dayton Peace Agreement was imposed by the International community, while especially promoted and advocated by USA. The Agreement has laid the foundations for creating a “non-peace and non-war” troublesome situation and has not solved the essential national and religious antagonisms in Bosnia. In particular, the scholars argue that one of the main conditions of peace-building and peace-keeping processes is the ability to reconcile, and further, to acknowledge war crimes committed by one’s own military. If Croatian public has by now acknowledged the war crimes against the Serbs in Croatia, it has also defined them as war crimes committed by *individual perpetrators* (Kajzer, 2006, p. 4). However, in the case of the crimes committed by the Croatian Army against Bosniak civilians during the war in 1992-1995, there is still no political formal acknowledgement of Croatia’s responsibility in those massacres that have taken place in Bosnia. That comes in spite of the fact of clear evidence of Croatian army’s crimes that was put forward by International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague, and further acknowledged by Croatian historians themselves (eg. Bilandzic, 2006; Kurspahic, 2003). In July 2006, the opinion polls showed that the Croatian public was split about this issue: 41 per cent of Croats believed that the Croatian Army committed war crimes in Bosnian war, while 59 per cent argued that Croatia was not involved in Bosnian war at all (Kajzer, 2006, p. 4).

Because the Croatian mainstream media have played an important role in spreading nationalistic propaganda (Thompson, 1995; Skopljanac Brunner et al., 2000) and continue to play a role in the reproduction of nationalisms (Erjavec & Volcic, 2006), our intention here is not to present yet another study of media’s negligence of war crimes, but go one step further and focus on how news producers of leading media themselves, i.e. Croatian journalists, talk about the war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina and whether and how they reproduce nationalisms. Therefore, in the summer and fall of 2006 we’ve conducted in-depth interviews with Croatian journalists in order to find out how they’ve dealt with traumatic events of the past, i.e. the war crimes.

In short, the main goal of this paper is to show how Croatian journalists borrow and appropriate different global discourses to legitimate Croatian army’s war crimes of Bosniaks civilians. We unpack and analyze how journalists employ, borrow and appropriate different current global discourses to make sense out of Croatian nationalistic discourse and war crimes in BiH. We draw here on Fairclough’s theory of a *recontextualisation*. Recontextualisation is understood here as not only a representation of social events but as the appropriation of discourse. Thus, we try to present an example of a study that uncovers recontextualisation strategies used by the informants to make sense and to justify a specific ideology (in our case, the nationalistic ideology of ‘Greater Croatia’) and specific practice (in our case, war crimes against the Bosniaks).

### The political-historical context of the former Yugoslavia

During the 1980s, after the death of its president Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the suppressed nationalisms conquered the social spheres of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Both major ethnic groups, Serbs and Croats, claimed

A member of the Muslim ethnic national community is called a Bosnjak (Bosniak) as distinct from Bosanac (Bosnian), which refers to a citizen of Bosnian general.

Nationalistic discourse here generally denotes those practices that create the objects of which they speak of. We define nationalistic discourse here as all those discursive practices and articulations that on the first level of an identity creation advocate a superiority of belonging to a nation. We understand national identity as involving both, self-awareness of the group and awareness of outside and inside ‘Others’ from which the nation wants to differentiate itself. Nation looks both inward, in order to unify itself, and outward, to divide itself from others. These socially constructed entities that nations are create cohesive identities through exclusionary nation

alistic discourses that invoke common and unified cultural codes and

to have been the victims of a continued persecution of the other, who, they claimed, dominated the SFRY.

The question as to what extent the idea of a former Yugoslav identity was accepted by country's populace during the period of 1945-1991 remains. One answer can be found in surveys on the expression of Yugoslav and national belonging. In BiH a mixture of three ethnic groups-43.7 per cent Muslim, 31.3 per cent Serb, 17.3 per cent Croat, 7.7 per cent 'Yugoslav' and 'Other' (*Statistics Bulletin*, 1991) – was particularly vulnerable to the nationalistic tensions in the region. The pressure mounted on Bosnian Serbs and Croats to follow the 'sacred nation cause' as Belgrade (Serbia) called for 'all Serbs in a single state' and Zagreb (Croatia) promoted Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) as the 'planetary party of all Croats' (MacDonald, 2002, p. 123). In November, 1990, during BiH's first free, multi-party elections the three most nationalist parties won and were immediately engaged in endless nationalistic quarrels.

In June 1991, the war in Slovenia first started (YU army/Serb forces trying to prevent the country's independence), and later, in Croatia, Serbian irregulars instigated violent clashes with Croatian paramilitary forces. In April 1992, the fighting spread from Croatian Eastern Slavonia to Krajina and to BiH. Generally, the former Yugoslav wars were a consequence of competing rights for national self-determinations in areas of nationally-mixed population. In this sense, it's important to stress that we understand all nationalisms in the lands of former Yugoslavia as equally dangerous and destructive (Volcic, 2006).

Serbs and Croats alike were exploiting their own pasts in order to present themselves as the victims. However, political elites in both states agreed on one issue – BiH – and on the question as of how to divide the Bosnian territory. 'Ironically, while a brutal Serbo-Croatian war raged, the two sides had reached a mutual understanding on plans to carve up 'Serbian' and 'Croatian' territories in BiH during the Milosevic-Tudjman talks in the spring of 1991' (Kurspahic, 2003, p. 97).

Importantly, both sides alike have committed war crimes, which included 'ethnic cleansing' (using terror to force people from the villages where their families had lived centuries), establishment of concentration camps <sup>4</sup> (where victims were beaten, tortured, raped and often killed), destruction of physical property (including destruction of approximately 1,4000 mosques), and numerous massacres of civilian population (200,000 deaths) (Samary, 1995; Woodward, 1995; Lampe, 1996). 'Tudjman and the Croatian armed forces supported the Bosnian Croats against the Bosnian Serbs, then a few months later also against Bosniaks' (Razsa and Lindstrom, 2004, p. 633) and 'some of the most gruesome scenes of the Serbs campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' were played in 'Croats' territories,' with the massacre of more than a hundred Bosniak civilians in Ahmici village in Central Bosnia on April 16, 1993, and with Bosniaks from Mostar, Capljina, and Stolac herded to concentration camps in Heliodrom, Dretelj' (Kurspahic, 2003, p. 128) and elsewhere (e.g. Vitez and Vareš) later in 1993 (Divjak, 2001, p. 136). And in both countries, the mainstream representations positioned Bosniaks as little more than an empty, invented and artificial nation with no historical claims to the BiH territory. For Croats and Serbs alike, the Muslims were the harbingers of a dangerous Islamic conspiracy, poised to take over the Balkans and the Western Europe (MacDonald, 2002, p. 9). 'Serbian and Croatian leaders both argued that Bosniaks were fallen members of their own nation, who had been forced to abandon their true identity after Ottoman invasion. Military leaders argued that they were simply 'liberating' parts of their ethnic homeland that had long been submerged under foreign rule, while 'freeing' Muslims from their artificial attachments' (ibid., p. 222).

Experiences.

Tudjman publicly admitted to the existence of Croatian 'collection centres, which house, by 1993, an estimated 20,000 inmates in the

In February 1994, the Clinton Administration issued an ultimatum to the Croatian government: either it removes its regular armed forces from BiH and renounces its ideas of a Croatian state within BiH or it faces a complete isolation. That very same year, the Croats and Bosniaks signed a non-aggression and common federation treaty in Washington, D.C. (Silber and Little, 1995, p. 353). On December 14 1995, following over three years of bloody conflict, the Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the Bosnian war. While claiming its objective to be democracy, and ethnic pluralism, the Agreement, as the critics point out, legalized the ethnic partition between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks. Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (with 51 per cent of the territory) inhabited mostly by Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, and the Republic of Serbia (with 49 per cent of the territory) populated almost exclusively by Bosnian Serbs. Furthermore, the Agreement separated the Federation of BiH into ten ethnically distinct cantons with very little intermixing between the two ethnic groups. Although fighting ceased in 1995, the conflict is not entirely resolved. Ethnic fragmentation and 'uncertain transitions' from socialism to democracy have contributed to the country's current situation of economic, social, and political suspension (Verdery & Burawoy, 1999, p. 188). Today, eleven years after the last military struggles in BiH, the international control over military forces is still present and it is the international community, which imposes controls and negotiates the peace in BiH. Furthermore, there are still conflicting visions of the BiH future. In 2005, Croatia began the EU accession negotiations; Serbia is due to start them when it arrests and surrenders the war crime suspect Ratko Mladic to the ICTFY.

## 2. Critical discourse analysis approach

In this study, we attempt to expand Fairclough's definition of recontextualisation as a representation of social events. Recontextualisation is understood here as the appropriation of discourse. In this case for instance, we refer to recontextualisation relations between the 'global' scale and the national/local scale and between the present and the past. We analyze how specific discourse about the war crimes is decontextulized and recontextualized, and thus gains new meanings. It is important to note here that local appropriation of the traumatic past to global political discourses occurs in accordance with specific local ideology. In this case, the Croatian journalists' discourse about war crimes in BiH is based on the dominant nationalistic ideology. Thus, we try to present an example of a study that uncovers recontextualisation used by the informants to legitimization and justification of war crimes.

In her recent study, Wodak (2006, p. 136) identifies numerous strategies employed by the visitors of the German *Wehrmacht* exhibition that focused on the war crimes committed by German soldiers and their dealing with the traumatic past. Shortly, these are: a) denying that war crimes happened at all, b) negating the context itself (refusals to deal with the issue at all; claiming ignorance and victim-hood of oneself), c) using strategy of scientific rationalization, d) creating 'positive self-representation', e) attempting to understand, and f) justifying or denying the war crimes: relativizing ('Every war is horrible. '), providing a (pseudo-)rational causal explanation ('Other forced us. '), the army was responsible ('I only did my duty. '), acknowledging the crimes, but attributing them to other units. We focus on strategies of justification and legitimization discourses of war crimes, because our main target group are those who do not deny that war crimes were committed. We want to go beyond the before-mentioned general justification

strategies, and analyse what kind of discourses were employed by our informants, journalists themselves. The linguistic analysis of the in-depth interviews was performed on four 'levels': analysis of the macro-proposition, linguistic strategies, choice of keywords, and representation of social actors.

The semantics of discourse deals with meanings in terms of 'propositions' (Brown & Yule, 1983). According to Van Dijk (1988), propositions are the smallest independent constructs of language and thought, typically expressed by single sentence or clause. On the basis of propositions, Van Dijk (1988) introduces the analysis of thematic organization of the news. This hierarchical structure consists of (macro-) propositions that define the most important or relevant pieces of information in the text. Semantic macrostructure is derived from local meanings of words by macro-rules, such as deletion, generalization and construction. Such rules have omitted irrelevant details, connecting the essence on a higher level into abstract meanings or constructing different meaning constituents in higher-level events or social concepts. In this study, a proposition is defined as an 'idea unit' in the form of a single sentence, several sentences, a paragraph or whole story. However, a proposition is a unit only for the convenience of comparison. The analysis of a type of macro-semantics, which deals with global meanings and enables the description of the meanings of in-depth interview, will be presented.

The analysis presented below focuses on the notion 'linguistic strategy', which is identified in terms of 'planned social (in our case, discursive) activities, of the political or socio-psychological aims or functions of these activities, and of (linguistic) means designed to help realise these aims' (Wodak et al., 2003, p. 34). For example, according to Wodak (2006, p. 136), a justification of one's activities during war (e.g. 'doing one's duty') is a linguistic strategy that serves the purpose of upholding one's self-image and presenting oneself favourable to an audience. Strategies are in turn realized by particular linguistic means, for example, giving one's own group a particular name (and another to 'other' group), using comparative adjectives, and so on.

In the analyzed transcripts, one of the main functions of social representation of the actors serves as an affirmation of the ideology by contrasting it to the opposing ideology. It is precisely for these reasons that we consider Hall's 'discourse of difference' as the most effective method to think through binary positions. Hall (1989) understands 'discourses of difference' (p. 913) as those that make a distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Any group, to be identified as a group, must be differentiated from the Others – both internal and external. Any kind of identity, as Hall further suggests, is primarily defined as a difference from the Others. The fact that meanings of 'us' and 'them', implying identification with and differentiation from, are not ontologically given, but ideologically constructed becomes even clearer through linguistic analysis. Still, because it appears so natural, this 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is rarely questioned. The construction of identity is a process of differentiation, a description of one's own group and a differentiation from the others (Wodak, 1996). This means that the identities of social actors in the texts are mostly constructed and defined as members of groups, and the emphasis is placed on representing the Others as different, deviant or even as a threat.

We analyzed the choice of keywords of the informants and compared them with groups of typical keywords. It is widely accepted that the choice of the words used by elites is by no means arbitrary. This particular choice is not only the elites' own creation, but is connected to their own society. Trew (1979) and Teo (2000) in their studies of lexical choice and ideologies concluded that all perceptions which are embodied in lexicalization, involve ideologies.

## Croatian (patriotic and nationalistic) journalism

As for the case in Croatia, during the 1990s there was a dominant professional ideology of a so-called “patriotic journalism” (Curgus, 1999, p. 128). The characteristic of Croatian mainstream journalism at the time was a “blood-and-soil” superiority, “my-country-right-or-wrong” version and “us-versus-them” mentality. An important phenomenon was then the *nationalization, popularization of the public sphere*. Media systems were centralized and any type of information was distributed according to the principle of national loyalty. Nationalistic journalism expressed obedience to authority, it established loyalty towards the state power and nationalistic elite, it conformed to conventions and the dominant common sense, and it remained loyal to the mainstream nationalistic principle (Billing, 1995). For example, articles were full of the “glorious history” to substantiate the myth of historical superiority of Croatian nation in relation to the others and forge the sense of nationalism and patriotism (Thompson, 1995; Skopljanac Brunner et al., 2000). Croatian reporters in mainstream media represented the Serbs and the Bosniaks as the unacceptable “others”, as the nation of an alien culture and civilization (Zakosek, 1999). They did not report or inform; their sole function was to validate the politics of the governing party (ibid.).

The analysis of mainstream Croatian and Serbian journalisms in 2005 has showed how both of them reproduce a particular kind of nationalism, albeit a more hidden one (Erjavec & Volcic 2006). They both also share the portrayal of the Bosniaks that continue to be represented as “the Other” in the mainstream media.

### 4. Data collection

Our research design included 25 problem-centered, qualitative interviews with Croatian journalists aged 24-50. During the interview, we asked them to give their understanding of the role of Croatia during the wars in BiH and especially to reflect upon the responsibility of Croatia for war crimes against Bosniaks (1992-1995). For our research analysis, these 25 journalists were carefully chosen as representing the national, mainstream journalism voices. These journalists work for different Croatian media that more or less support the official governmental policies, and have the largest circulations among the non-tabloid media (Malovic, 2004, p. 128-131): from daily newspapers *Vecernji list* (5), and *Slobodna dalmacija* (5); and from national radio and television *Hrvatski radio* (5), *Hrvatska televizija* (5), and five journalists from national news agency *Hina*, that continues to be one of the main information sources for majority of media.

None of the interviewed journalists had participated in the wars in the former Yugoslavia (1991-1995). The empirical data for this article then are based on in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews conducted in different regions of Croatia in the summer and fall of 2006. All interviews were conducted in the Croatian language by both researchers <sup>5</sup>. Although the interviews contained specific questions, the interviewees’ responses sometimes called for improvisation. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by both researchers and were analyzed in terms of recurring narratives and themes. We used this technique of research in order to gather data on our informants’ perceptions beyond the official declaration of leaders, or as reported in the media, and thus offer more in-depth information on their perceptions than surveys would generally reveal. To ensure the respondents’ anonymity, we labelled our informants by using letters.

territory Herceg-Bosna (McDonald, 2002, p. 241).

Both researchers come from the region of former Yugoslavia and they both speak and read Serbian and Croatian languages. There were no significant problems with the translations.

## 5. Croatian crime war discourses

Analysed transcripts of in-depth interviews show four recontextualization strategies, divided into four sub-chapters.

### 1. 'We had to fight against Islamic terrorism.'

The comparison of the propositions of the in-depth interviews' transcripts enables us to discover that the proposition, 'We had to fight against Islamic terrorism', is adopted by more than a half of all the interviews (13). Croatian journalists have not just used the strategy of relativism, with which they would enumerate crimes of other nations, or use clichés that relativize the past ('Every war is horrible') (Wodak, 2006, p. 137), but have appropriated G. W. Bush's 'war on terrorism' discourse according to their own socio-historical context without regret. Most of the research on G.W. Bush's discourse after September 11 (e.g. Chomsky, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Kellner, 2002, 2003; Bailey & Chermak, 2003; Graham et al., 2004; Höjjer et al., 2004; Ottosen, 2004) agrees that the discourse contains the following elements: the war has been proclaimed between good and evil; the evil Other is Islamic terrorism, personified by bin Laden; and the West has to unite in a war against terrorism to defend its civilization and its freedom. By recontextualizing Bush's discourse into the former Yugoslav context the journalists were drawing an analogy between the war against Bosniaks and the USA war against terrorism to make sense of and legitimize and justify the Croatian war against Muslims in BiH and massacres of Bosniak civilians. For example, here is a typical statement:

Interviewer: What is your opinion about the war crimes committed by the Croatian armed forces against the Bosniaks in BiH?

Informant M: I think that Croatia had to fight against Islamic terrorists like America or the West do...

Interviewer: Were the Bosniaks who were killed – also terrorists?

Informant M: It is well-known that most of the Bosniaks are Islamic fundamentalists.

Journalists use the same binary opposition as Bush regarding two groups: 'us' ('good/terrorists' victims/Croats) versus 'them' ('Islamic terrorists/evil/Bosniaks'). They associate themselves with 'the terrorists' victims', i.e. victims of war in BiH and completely identify with the Croatian political leadership and army (indicated through frequent use of 'we', what 'we had to fight', while describing how terrorism in BiH 'forced' the Croatian army to attack BiH). 'The Other' is portrayed as Muslims in general, Muslims in BiH, Islamic terrorists, Mujahedin fighters and Al-Qaida. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) are equated with Islamic terrorists. Thus, the journalists reproduce Bush's binary discourse except in that they appropriate it according to their own context: while they position themselves as the good ones, and 'the victims' of their own 'local' Muslim perpetrators, at the same time they accuse them of being connected with 'global' Islamic terrorists. The statements employed in this kind of argumentation rely on common-sense language such as 'everybody knows' or 'we all know' to further naturalize this polarization. Our journalists also use the modal verb 'have to' to connote meaning that Croats had no other choice than to defend themselves and kill Bosniaks. Journalists name BiH as 'the Balkan base of terrorism' and the war against Bosniaks as 'war on terrorism'. For example:

Al Qaeda cells were established in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1990s, and their creator is Ayman Az Zawahiri...Let me explain... Bosniaks answered Zawahiri's calls and started to organize bases of terrorism in which the plans for attacking the Western countries are being plotted. BiH was the Balkan base of terrorism. When the Croats went to war in Bosnia, they went to war on terrorism. (Informant V)

The Bush's 'war on terrorism' includes many essentialist stereotypes about Islam and violent Muslims (see Karim, 2002). Similarly, most of our journalists recycle these stereotypes of Muslims as terrorists. Overall, this stereotypical image is explained by global political factor, but it relies on essentialist and simplistic biological evidence: 'terrorism is in the Muslims' blood':

You should understand... everybody knows that the Muslims are terrorists... It is in their blood. (Informant J)

## 2. 'To Kill Bosniak civilians was a necessary evil just like in Iraq.'

A similar justification strategy, i.e. a comparison between one's own politics and military with others, exists in a different, more cotemporary case of global conflicts. It is still primarily a terrorism discourse, nevertheless, some journalists did not compare the Croatian-Bosnian war with the US war on terror. Instead they drew an analogy with the USA-Iraq war and claimed that 'killing Bosniak civilians was a necessary evil just like ... what's going on in Iraq today'. The journalists used the same binary opposition as the USA government regarding two groups: 'us' ('good/terrorists' victims/Croats') vs. 'them' ('terrorists/evil/Islamic terrorists'). They were explicit about equating the 'Croatian Army' with the 'the USA Army' and 'Iraqi rebels' with 'Islamic terrorists'. They borrowed an 'Iraqi war' (see Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2005) which they appropriated according to their own context to make sense of and legitimize the Croatian war against Muslims in BiH and massacres of Bosniaks civilians. According to Nohrstedt & Ottosen (2005), an 'Iraqi war discourse' features a belief that civilian casualties are a necessary evil, i.e. death of innocent Iraqi civilians is a fair price to pay for attacks against Iraqi rebels. Journalists similarly justified the killings by arguing that Bosniak civilians had been ruthlessly manipulated by Islamic terrorists. The latter had, according to our informants, set their bases and placed their weapons in populated areas, although they had known that any attack of Croatian armed forces on their bases would have led to heavy casualties among innocent civilians. For example:

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the war crimes committed by the Croatian armed forces against the Bosniaks in BiH?

Informant O: I regret civilian casualties, but dead Bosniak civilians were a necessary evil in that war.

Interviewer: Can you explain what you think?

Informant O: Well, the problem was that they were manipulated by the terrorists, who hide among civilians and were shooting from civilian positions ... and our people could not destroy Islamic terrorists and avoid civilian casualties at the same time.

Interviewer: Why had the Croatian Army not stopped attacking the Bosniaks?

Journalists O: Look ... there is a similar case in Iraq these days. The USA military has not stopped the attacks just because Iraqi rebels set its bases and weapons amid Iraqi civilians. Besides, Bosniaks and Iraqi are not real civilians; they protect and support Islamic terrorists. The Croats would never do it...

This example, like the case of an Iraqi war discourse (ibid.), also demonstrates that there is a differentiation of civilians between 'completely innocent Croatian civilians' and 'not real Bosniak (Iraqi) civilians' who support Islamic terrorists. In



contrast to recontextualisation of 'war on terrorism', recontextualisation of an 'Iraqi war discourse' includes regret and a clear distinction between terrorists and Bosniak civilians.

### 3. 'We had to defend Europe against Islam.'

The next justification strategy was to fight for Europe. Our informants claimed that 'they probably had to kill Bosniaks to defend Europe against Islam'. They not only "seek to provide a (pseudo-)rational causal explanation for the war crimes" (Wodak, 2006, p. 137), but they appropriate the 'European discourse' to their own political-historical context to make sense of and legitimize and justify the Croatian war against Muslims in BiH and massacres of Bosniaks civilians. Most of the research on 'European discourse' (e.g. Wintle, 1996; Puntcher Riekmann, 1997; Mastnak, 1998; Spohn & Triandafyllidou, 2003; Velikonja, 2005) agrees that the Eurocentric discourse contains the following elements: obsessive repetition of 'Europe', 'European' without explanation as to what these attributes were supposed to mean; anything that is of any value is 'European' (e.g. European trends, way of life, culture, civilization, quality, values, prosperity, dynamics) and at the same time, all things that are obsolete, problematic, violent and all that is out, stand for the other side – the Balkans, the East, the communist past the Muslims and so on; and the terms 'European Union' and 'Europe' are frequently used interchangeably. Thus, Europe has become a kind of a magic formula, a moral concept, a synonym of the new meaning. Our journalists also used the modal verb 'have to' to connote meaning, that Croats had had no other choice but to kill Bosniaks in order to protect Europe.

An example from the interview depicts the above:

Interviewer: Why did the Croatian Army kill Bosniaks during the war?

Informant L: In a way... we had to fight to defend Europe.

Interviewer: Against what?

Informant L: Well, to prevent a creation of an Islamic state in Europe.

The journalists conveyed the image of Croatia protecting the West from barbarous East, with the Muslims trying to set up an Islamic State and invade Europe, in a manner reminiscent of the Ottoman invasion. The journalists also compared the Bosniaks to 'Turkish occupiers'. They accused the Bosniaks of trying to take over the Balkans and Europe. The picture of Croatia standing on the border between East and West was a powerful image. For example:

Muslim's leaders had plans to make Sarajevo a European Islamic capital, housing some 15 million European Muslims. We had to prevent this. (Informant S)

The journalists represented Bosniaks or BiH as non-European and with that implicitly include its own nation and nation-state as belonging to Europe. For example:

Muslim government was transforming Bosnia and Herzegovina into the first Islamic republic of Europe. We had to prevent it, because Islam has never been a part of Europe. ... It is obvious, that Muslims in BiH were in Europe's way because it did not react.

The journalists reduced all Muslims to a monolithic and irrationally violent 'Other', and recycled Western stereotypes (see Karim, 1997; Said, 1978, 1997) about Muslims and Islam. Karim (1997) in particular argues that violence, lust, and barbarism seem to be the primary western images associated with 'Islam' and he cautions against drawing hurried conclusions about the nature of Islam. Bosniaks become framed as having a different way of life than the Croats and other Europeans. The journalists blame the Bosniaks in general for trying to

transform and change 'our European way of life.' They use the words 'Muslims', 'Bosniaks', 'Turkish occupiers' synonymously, just as 'Croats' is interchangeable with 'Europeans'. By using strategy of cultural differentiation journalists also seek to construct a meaning that exists as a homogeneous one, expressing a bounded and a unified European cultural way of life and at the same time again deny any structural discrepancies between them and other Europeans. The journalists regularly used the notion of 'our' Europe/our European way of life/world in order to include themselves and their Croatian imagined community in the European 'we'-group.

Muslims tried to infiltrate their Islamic habits here, and changed our European way of life. (Informant U), Bosniaks are known for their regression, orientalism, corporeality, intimacy, and for being rural, uncivil, uncivilized, and funny (Informant F) ... they do not share the European habits. (Informant L) ... they do not share common European values. (Informant P) ... they do not have free speech, democracy or freedom of religion. (Informant H) ... they do not listen Western music and favour Arab-sounding music (Informant K)

The journalists emphasized the cultural differences – grounded in the cultural Otherness of Muslims (including a way of life, habits, customs and manners). Many scholars (Barker, 1981; Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Miles, 1994) define this kind of a cultural differentiation as a kind of 'differentialist racism', 'cultural racism', or 'culturalist racism'.

They represented their own religion as a peaceful one. On the other hand, Islam is portrayed as aggressive and violent. For example,

from Bosnia, peace-loving Catholics were being expelled ... Islamists were trying hard to create and violently push for Muslim laws within the Christian Europe. (Informant P)

#### **4. 'We had to defend our property and market.'**

Lastly, journalists recontextualized neo-liberal discourse and argued that 'they had to defend their property and market'. Most of the research on neo-liberal discourse (e.g. Boreus, 1997; Fairclough, 2000a, 2000b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Tickell & Peck, 2006) agree that this discourse includes a narrative of progress: the 'globalised' world offers unprecedented opportunities for 'growth' through intensified 'competition', 'privatisation', 'financial and labour market deregulation', 'trade liberalisation', but requiring unfettered 'free trade' and the dismantling of 'state bureaucracy' and 'unaffordable welfare programmers', 'flexibility of labour', 'transparency', 'modernization' and so forth. Here is a statement from one of the interviews:

Interviewer: What is your opinion on the war crimes committed by the Croatian armed forces against the Bosniaks in BiH?

Informant E: Let me explain ... Well ... in the former Yugoslavia, the Croatian economy invested too much in BiH to stand still whilst Bosniaks were stealing its property ... Indeed, we had to defend our property and market.

Interviewer: Why did the Croatian Army kill Bosniaks?

Informant E: They were extremists, who wanted to live on other people's account ... after all, they were against the reforms of the entire social system. They wanted to live forever in Communism and to retain their privileges. We, the Croats, literally supported them; all our tourism revenues were meant and have gone for the undeveloped. And then, they wanted to take away our property and keep it for themselves. ... It is obvious that Bosniaks are against progress. Modern world is about privatisation, financial and labour market deregulation, trade liberalisation, welfare cutbacks, the knowledge-based economy, integration into global processes, etc, and not to invest into projects that one knows beforehand they will be unprofitable on behalf of social peace, protection of idlers, and collective responsibility ... Indeed, it is primarily about individual responsibility for one's own work, which Bosniaks lack.

This example shows how journalists used neo-liberal discourse and appropriated it according to their own political-historical context to make sense of, legitimize and justify the Croatian war against Bosniaks in BiH and massacres of Bosniak civilians. They used an economic argument: 'we had to defend our property and market' to justify and legitimize war against Bosniaks and massacres of Bosniaks civilians. In this line they used neo-liberal phrases, such as 'privatisation', 'financial and labour market deregulation', 'trade liberalisation', 'welfare cutbacks', 'the knowledge-based economy', 'integration into global processes' to present Croatia as a part of the economically developing capitalist world in contrast to all Bosniaks, who are undeveloped, lazy, exploiters, individually irresponsible, and extremists, and who still adore Communism. The journalists emphasize that neo-liberal development is inevitable in a modern world which requires that Croatia's development is based on the neo-liberal positions. This belief was expressed with a phrase 'the modern world requires that we' and a lack of responsible social agents. Even in this case, our journalists used a modal verb 'to have to' to connote a meaning that Croatians had had no choice but to kill Bosniaks. Thus, they used a neo-liberal discourse and represented neo-liberalism as a social inevitability to justify Croatian war crimes committed in BiH.

## 6. Conclusion

Interviewed journalists used and borrowed from four modern and extended discourses to justify and legitimize the war against Bosniaks and massacres of Bosniaks civilians. What is particularly interesting here is that they did not resort to an old (and in the former Yugoslavia popularly accepted justification) that massacres of Bosniaks had been committed by more or less crazy individuals, political renegades, criminals, or bandits (Magas & Zanic, 2001). The journalists accepted that the aforementioned had been planned by the Croatian government, however, they justified and legitimized it by appropriating already established modern discourses, such as 'war on terrorism', 'Iraqi war', 'European' and neo-liberal discourses. They also completely identified with the Croatian political leadership and army (indicated through frequent use of 'we', what 'we had to fight', while describing how Bosniaks 'forced' the Croatian army to attack BiH). Although some interviewees regretted that war crimes had been committed, they also argued that they had been inevitable.

The research also shows a transformation of the prevailing Croatian discourses in the last ten to fifteen years. For example, despite the country's troublesome relationship with the US administration the prevailing Croatian discourse has been transformed after 9/11 to demonstrate a shared commonality of interests with its one-time assailant. Another example of a radical change in discourse is an attitude towards Europe. Croatian intellectuals and mainstream media of the early 1990s labelled Europe as 'a whore', a synonym for a moral and emotional corruption (more in Buden, 2002). Today, Europe and Europeaness have become a magic formula, and a moral concept. A change from Communism to neo-liberalism, however, demonstrates the most rapid ideological and social leap.

## 7. References

- Bailey, Y. F. & Chermak, S. (2003). Introduction. In S. Chermak, F.Y. Bailey & M. Brown (Eds.), *Media Representation of September 11* (pp 1-14). Westport, Praeger.
- Balibar, E. & Wallerstein, I. (1991). *Race, Nation, Class. Les Identites Ambigues*, Paris: Editions La Decouverte.
- Barker, M. (1981). *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.
- Bilandzic, D. (2006). *Povijest izbliza – memoarski zapisi 1945-2005*. Zagreb: Prometej Zagreb.
- Boreus, K. (1997). The shift to the right: Neo-liberalism in argumentation and language in the Swedish public debate since 1969. *European Journal of Political Research*, 31, 257-286.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (2001). NewLiberalSpeak: notes on the new planetary vulgate. *Radical Philosophy*, 105, 2-5.
- Brenner, N. & Theodore, N. (Eds.) (2002). *Spaces of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buden, B. (2002). *Kaptolski kolodvor*. Beograd: CZSU.
- Chomsky, N. (2001). *9-11*. New York: Seven Seals Press.
- Curgus, V. K. (1999). Oblaèenje novena. In N. Skopljanac-Brunner, A. Hod•iaè & B. Kri□toviaè (Eds.), *Mediji i rat* (pp. 121-137). Beograd: Mediji.
- Divjak, J. (2001). The First Phase, 1992-1992. In B. Magas and I. Zanic (Eds.), *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995* (pp. 136-7). London: Frank Cass.
- Erjavec, K. (2002). September 11. Media Construction of Risk Discourse: Critical Discourse Analysis. *MediaJournal*, 26, 19-31.
- Erjavec, K. & Volcic, Z (2006). Mapping the notion of “terrorism” in Serbian and Croatian newspapers. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 30, 1-21.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Longman.
- (2000a). *New Labour, New Language*. London: Routledge.
- (2000b). Language and neo-liberalism. *Discourse & Society*, 11, 147-178.
- (2003) *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.

- Galtung, J. (2002). Conflicts: The Yugoslavia Conflict 1991/1995. In J. Galtung, C. G. Jaconsen & K. F. Brand-Jacobsen (Eds.), *Searching for Peace: The Road to Transcend* (pp. 235-237). London: Pluto Press.
- Graham, P., Keenan, T. & Down, A.-M. (2004). A call to arms at the end of history: a discourse-historical analysis of George W. Bush's declaration of war on terror. *Discourse & Society*, 15, 199-222.
- Hall, S. (1989). *Ideologie, Kultur, Medien: Neue Rechte, Rassismus*. Hamburg: Argument.
- Höijer, B., Nohrstedt, S. A. & Ottesen, R. (2004). Introduction. In S. A. Nohrstedt & R. Ottesen (Eds.), *U.S. and the Others* (pp. 7-22). Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Kajzer, R. (2006, 6 July). Tu□man spet buri duhove, *Delo*, 4.
- Karim, K. H. (1997). The Historical Resilience of Primary Stereotypes: Core Images of the Muslim Other. In S. H. Riggins (ed.) *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse* (pp. 153-182). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- (2002). Making sense of the 'Islamic peril': Journalism as cultural practice. In B. Zelizer & S. Allan (Eds.) *Journalism after September 11* (pp. 101-116). London and New York: Routledge.
- Kellner, D. (2002). September 11, Social Theory and Democratic Politics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2, 147-159.
- (2003). *From 9/11 to Terror War: Dangers of the Bush Legacy*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lampe, J. (1996). *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There was a Country*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Malovic, S. (2004). Croatia. In B. Petkovic (ed.), *Media ownership and its impact on media independence and pluralism* (pp. 119-140). Ljubljana: Peace Institute.
- MacDonald, D. B. (2002). *Balkan Holocausts?* Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mastnak, T. (1998). *Evropa med evolucijo in evtanazijo*. Ljubljana: Studia humanitas-Aples.
- Miles, R. (1994). Explaining Racism in Contemporary Europe. In A. Rattansi & S. Westwood (Eds.), *Racism, Modernity & Identity* (pp. 189-221). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nohrstedt, S. A. / Ottesen, R. (Eds.) (2005). *Global War-Local Views*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Kurspahic, K. (2003). *Prime time crime: Balkan media in war and peace*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.
- Ottesen, R. (2004). Mr. President: "The Enemy is Closer than You Might Think". In S. A. Nohrstedt & R. Ottesen (Eds.), *U.S. and the Others* (pp. 107-129). Göteborg: Nordicom.

- Puntscher Riekman, S. (1997). The Myth of European Union. In G. Hosking & G. Schopflin (Eds.), *Myths and Nationhood* (pp. 60-71). London: Hurst & Company and University of London.
- Razsa, M. & Lindstrom, N. (2004). Balkan Is Beautiful: Balkanism in the Political Discourse of Tudjman's Croatia. *East European Politics and Society*, 18, 628-650.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- (1997). *Covering Islam*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Samary, C. (1995). *Yugoslavia Dismembered*. New York: Monthly Review pres.
- Sampson, S. (2003). From Reconciliation to Coexistence. *Public Culture*, 15, 181-186.
- Silber, L. & Little, A. (1995). *The Death of Yugoslavia*. London: Peguin.
- Skopljanac Brunner, N., Gredelj, S., Hodzic, A. & Kristofic, B. (Eds.). (2000). *Media & war*. Belgrad: Agency Argument.
- Spohn, W. & Triandafyllidou, A. (Eds.). (2003). *Europeanisation: National Identity and Migration: Changes in Boundary Constructions between Western and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge.
- Statistics Bulletin* (1991). Sarajevo: Republic's Bureau for Statistics.
- Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the news: a Critical Discourse Analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse & Society*, 11, 7-49.
- Tickell, A. & Peck, J. (2006). Making global rules: globalisation or neoliberalisation?. Retrieved September 30, 2006, from [www.geocities.com/pw.graham/indcindex.html](http://www.geocities.com/pw.graham/indcindex.html).
- Todorova, M. (1997). *Imagining the Balkans*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, M. (1995). *Proizvodnja rata: Mediji u Srbiji, Hrvatskoj i Bosni i Hercegovini*. Beograd: Medija centar Radio B-92.
- Trew, T. (1979). What the papers say: Linguistic variation and ideological difference. In R. Fowler, R. Hodge, G. Kress and T. Trew (Eds.) *Language and Control* (pp. 214-245). London: Routledge and Keagen Paul.
- Van Dijk, A. T. (1988). *News as discourse*, Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Verdery, K. and Burawoy, J. M. 1999 *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Volcic, Z. (2006). Blaming the Media: Serbian narratives of national(ist) identity. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 20, 313 – 330.
- Wilson, R. (2001). *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wintle, M. (ed). (1996). *Culture and Identity in Europe: Perception of Divergence and Unity in Past and Present*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Wodak, R. (1996). The Genesis of Racist Discourse in Austria. In C.R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds), *Texts and Practice: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 107-128). London: Routledge.

– (2006). History in the making/The making of history. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 5, 125-154.

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M. & Liebhart, K. (1999). *The discursive construction of national identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press Ltd.

Woodward, S. L. (1995). *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*. Washington. D.C: The Brookings Institution.

Zakosek, N. (1999). Legitimacija rata: Politička konstrukcija nove zbilje. In N. Skopljanac-Brunner, A. Hodžić & B. Krištofić (Eds.), *Mediji i rat* (pp. 15-39). Beograd: Mediji.