

**ELEMENTS OF PEACE JOURNALISM IN SERBIAN MEDIA:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE ISRAELI–PALESTINIAN  
CONFLICT ON NEWS PORTALS *DANAS* AND *KURIR***

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**Abstract**

Peace journalism, as a counter-concept of war journalism, has occupied the attention of media theorists for more than 20 years. Starting from the premise that war journalism, driven by commercial interests, leans towards sensationalism, peace journalism is suggested as a viable alternative framework for conflict reporting. While war journalism focuses on violence, the propaganda efforts of political elites and stereotypical polarisations, peace journalism is expected to provide a broader, more substantial, and accurate representation of conflict. Given this theoretical framework, the aim of the article is to examine the elements and perspective of peace journalism in Serbian media practice, using the current Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a case study. The article employs comparative analysis and quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative analysis is based on five opposing indicators typical of war and peace journalism, which have been previously used in the work of Nicole Yang Lai Fong (2009). Those indicators are: elite-oriented vs. people-oriented; differences-oriented vs. reports the areas of agreement; focuses on here and now vs. reports causes and consequences; dichotomises the good and bad vs. avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys; and partisan vs. non-partisan. The corpus consists of journalistic texts published at the beginning of the conflict, from October 7 to October 13, 2023, as well as texts published between April 22 and April 28, 2024. The analysed texts were published in online editions of the daily newspapers *Kurir* and *Danas*. The results showed that indicators typical of peace journalism are significantly less present compared to indicators typical of war journalism – regardless of whether it is about tabloids or professional media. Also, sensationalism is still the primary approach when it comes to reporting on such topics.

**Key words:** peace journalism, war journalism, conflict, Israel, Palestine.

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## ЕЛЕМЕНТИ МИРОВОГ НОВИНАРСТВА У СРПСКИМ МЕДИЈИМА – СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА: ИЗВЕШТАВАЊЕ ПОРТАЛА *ДАНАСИ КУРИР* О СУКОБУ ИЗРАЕЛА И ПАЛЕСТИНЕ

### Апстракт

Мировно новинарство, као контраконцепт ратног новинарства, више од 20 година окупира пажњу теоретичара медија. Полазећи од претпоставке да се ратно новинарство, због комерцијалне вредности, базира на сензационализму, мировно новинарство се предлаже као други могући оквир приликом извештавања о конфликту. Док је, с једне стране, ратно новинарство фокусирано на насиље, пропагандну борбу политичких елита и стереотипне поларизације, од мировног новинарства се очекује да пружи шири, садржајнији и тачнији приказ конфликта. Имајући у виду ове теоријске поставке, циљ рада је да се испитају елементи и перспективе мировног новинарства у српској медијској пракси на примеру актуелног сукоба Израела и Палестине. У раду ће бити коришћена компаративна анализа и квантитативна и квалитативна анализа садржаја. Квантитативна анализа се заснива на пет супротстављених индикатора типичних за ратно и мировно новинарство, који су претходно коришћени у раду Никол Јанг Лаи Фонг (Nicole Yang Lai Fong), 2009. Ти индикатори су: Оријентисаност на елиту насупротив оријентисаности на људе; Оријентисаност на разлике насупротив извештавању о областима слагања; Фокусирање на овде и сада насупротив извештавању о узроцима и последицама; Дихотомизација доброг и лошег насупротив избегавању етикетирања добрих и лоших момака; Пристрасни насупротив непристрасном приступу представљања конфликта. Корпус чине текстови објављени на почетку сукоба, од 7. до 13. октобра 2023. године, као и текстови објављени у периоду од 22. до 28. априла 2024. Анализирани су текстови објављени у онлајн издањима дневних листова *Курир* и *Данас*. Резултати су показали да су индикатори типични за мировно новинарство значајно мање присутни у поређењу са индикаторима типичним за ратно новинарство – без обзира да ли се ради о таблоидима или професионалним медијима. Такође, сензационализам је и даље примарни приступ када је у питању извештавање о оваквим темама.

**Кључне речи:** мировно новинарство, ратно новинарство, конфликт, Израел, Палестина.

### INTRODUCTION

War journalism has been an integral part of the journalistic profession from its inception. Information about conflicts, battles, and wars has always attracted public attention and been among the most written-about topics. When the press appeared in the 11 most developed European countries in the first half of the 17th century, publishers realised that the audience was not interested in protocol information, but in texts about war events, as Mihailo Bjelica and Zoran Jevtović observe:

From 1618 to 1648, a great war, known as the Thirty Years' War, raged in Europe. Although it was fought on the territories of Bohemia and Germany, it had the character of a European war, as Den-

mark, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and England were also involved in the conflict, directly or indirectly. In form, it was a religious war between Catholics and Protestants, and in causes and consequences, deeply social and political, as it was fought at the time of the disintegration of feudalism and brought many changes to the political map of Europe.

(Bjelica & Jevtović, 2006, p. 33)

Even during the expansion of the printed media in Europe, it became clear that battles are not won only on the field, but also in the media. This was also observed by the German economist Karl Bücher, who wrote back in 1915 that since the invention of the print the public has always witnessed the same drama: “Every war waged with weapons is accompanied by a war with printing ink, in which each side tries to win over public opinion for itself” (Kunczik & Zipfel, 2006, p. 264).

With time, war journalism acquired its own characteristics and developed as a distinct category within the journalistic profession. According to Johan Galtung, war journalism has four main characteristics: war/violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented, and victory-oriented through a zero-sum approach in which the expected outcome is that one side wins everything and the other side loses everything. (Galtung, 2003, p. 177). Furthermore, there are various guidelines for the behaviour and conduct of journalists in war circumstances, such as: A journalist is expected to be present enough to respond to what is happening, but also absent enough to remain safe; to be authoritative enough to provide reliable information, yet remain open to various claims presented as true; to passionately report on the undermining of human dignity, but also to remain impartial and detached in order to discern strategies and patterns which are typical for war circumstances, so one-sided reporting could be avoided (Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p. 4-5). Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that wartime represents specific circumstances in which certain principles of the journalistic profession are redefined. This primarily refers to objectivity, that is, the journalist’s ability to refrain from bias, as well as to prevent their work from becoming a propaganda tool. On the other hand, the question arises whether it is necessary and possible for a journalist to remain impartial and emotionally detached when witnessing various consequences and damages of war (murders, atrocities, human rights violations, etc.). Therefore, the characteristics of war journalism are constantly being updated and re-examined in academic circles. In recent decades, this concept has been further segmented into various subcategories that include peace journalism, developed not only as a counter-concept but also as an important part of comprehensive war reporting.

### *THE CONCEPT OF OBJECTIVITY IN JOURNALISM*

Despite efforts of journalists to present a balanced and impartial picture of war conflict, for numerous media theorists, this is an unattainable ideal. Due to the often crucial role of in-war conflicts, the media are most often studied as a weapon and instrument of war. More precisely, the way public reacts to a war depends on how that conflict is presented in the media. It is an indisputable fact that objectivity is considered one of the greatest values of journalism, but we can often hear the cliché that in war, the truth, or rather objective information, is the first to ‘die.’ Addressing the problem of objectivity in the journalistic profession, Jevtović noted:

Objectivity implies that facts, media statements, and images are based on reality and truth, despite the fact that the journalist, as an interpreter, is always a subjective person. In practice, we have often witnessed reporting that, through bias and partisanship, has drifted towards subjectivity and propaganda.

(Jevtović, 2014, p. 71)

Other significant theoretical frameworks include the four theoretical approaches towards objectivity by Ulrich Saxer:

1. the possibility of media objectivity is unconditionally accepted;
2. objectivity is critically and principally accepted – it is striven for, but its absolutism is not insisted on;
3. media objectivity is accepted as a principle, but the possibility of its realisation is disputed due to the journalists’ inability to overcome subjectivity; and
4. objectivity is rejected as an ideological fiction (Kunczik & Zipfel, 2006, p. 150-151).

Objectivity in journalism is tightly connected with a framing theory, and one of its main principles is that the media do not present a real picture of the world, but a constructed one. This is achieved through frames that can be described as: “cognitive structures that shape the way we perceive, reason and act. They allow us to understand reality in the form of narratives” (Soules, 2015, p. 14). Simply put, through frames, we obtain pieces of information about events that are placed in a specific context and that imply a certain conclusion. Frames are used in media reporting to define the context of a story, highlight or diminish its importance, and, implicitly, suggest to the audience the conclusions they should draw. American professor of media Robert Entman points out that media frames work in the following way: “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2004, p. 5). As noted by Marshall Soules: “As a narrative device, framing exerts a powerful influence on storytelling and audience interpretation” (Soules, 2015, p. 15). There are multiple types or levels of frames – from culture as the broadest

frame, socio-institutional frames, to frames of national, cultural, and racial identity. All of them influence personal frames, but also significantly influence the creation of media frames. When creating media frames, the personal, professional, and political beliefs of journalists and editors play a significant role, as well as their economic and political interests. These factors also influence which frame will be applied in reporting on a particular conflict. That will largely depend on personal frames of the reporter, which are also influenced by cultural and social frames, as noted by Miki Tanikawa:

The articles from the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, and *Asahi* exhibit efforts by journalists to place the current subject matter, foreign cultures, and societies, in historic time – in a manner of speaking, even as the articles are pegged to a recent event.

(Tanikawa, 2019, p. 2447)

Taking into account the characteristics of war journalism, the aforementioned categories of objectivity, and theoretical aspects, the concept of empathetic journalism is developed, which implies that a reporter: “must have a clear stance and should show more empathy for one of the warring sides” (Barović, 2008, p. 145). This type of journalism is based on the premises that compassion and sympathy for a particular side are prioritised over factual reporting, and this very thesis is the foundation for what we call peace journalism. One of the greatest advocates of empathetic journalism is the BBC war correspondent, Martin Bell. He believes that ceasefires, prisoner exchanges, humane treatment of the wounded, war crimes, and humanitarian disasters are just some of the situations in which it is impossible and immoral for a journalist to remain impartial (Bell, 1997).

This, certainly, does not mean that the category of objectivity in professional reporting should be disregarded. The public, as observed by Velibor Petković, still relies on media to see and understand the world around them: “Users find it difficult to understand that the ‘objectivity’ of an image is just an illusion because visual media, as well as auditory, actively produce signs and are not ‘pure, immediate information’” (Petković, 2024, p. 304). But this characteristic of media does not neglect the fact that a journalist is a human being who, in war circumstances, is often a participant in various events, to which it is difficult to remain immune and indifferent.

### *PEACE JOURNALISM AS A CONCEPT*

When we talk about peace journalism, we mean a way of reporting that is oriented towards the peaceful resolution of conflict (Gavilán, 2011, p. 1). The author of this concept is Norwegian academic Johann Galtung, who theorised that the media, through linguistic constructions, can influ-

ence the polarisation of public opinion during conflict. Taking into account this characteristic of the media, he proposed the term peace journalism as a counter-concept to war journalism (Galtung, 2003). Essentially, peace journalism is oriented towards ending the conflict, and truthful and, as far as possible, objective reporting, taking into account the opinions of conflict victims, with the ultimate outcome being peace based on compromise where all involved parties achieve some benefit. Although professional journalism constantly tries to reach objectivity as its ideal, it is indisputable that this profession is largely subordinated to the subjectivity of the journalist. In such circumstances, the journalist is not a transmitter, but an interpreter of events, and therefore has the power to redirect public opinion to one side or the other. This means that war, in a media context, is framed as a sport game or gladiatorial arena, a 'We versus Them' confrontation, where there can only be one winner, and the focus is on the visible consequences of war - human losses and material damage.

The way of reporting in war journalism is also influenced by so-called news factors, according to which information is sorted based on its importance. One of these factors is the news value. As Stephan Russ-Mohl writes, the more negative the event, the more value it has: "Conflicts, wars, catastrophes, violence, and crime rank far above other news. Cynics in the media world therefore comment: Only bad news is good news" (Rus-Mol, 2005, p. 115). Such news usually has the greatest impact, but negativity in the media can often border on sensationalism.

Significant news factors relevant for the topic of this article also include status and dynamics. Status implies that statements from representatives of the elite, or those in positions of power, have a much greater chance of being published in the media than statements from those in lower positions. On the other hand, dynamics relies on surprise and intensity, which often occur in war journalism and therefore attract significant attention – especially in combination with other factors such as timeliness, relevance, identification, and replaceability in images. (Rus-Mol, 2005: p. 105-120).

Considering that interest in war-related topics has always been high, it is also important to take into account the modern era, in which such topics are exploited for financial gain. Contemporary online journalism largely relies on digital metrics and algorithms that track user behaviour, reactions, and desires. Due to the increase in the number of online media, as well as their technical characteristics, editors and journalists are shifting from the concept of gatekeeping (selecting and placing news according to strict criteria) to the concept of gatewatching. This means:

...that it was no longer necessary to reject news that failed to meet the highest editorial criteria, but that now even those could be published, while the most important among them are merely highlighted to give them greater significance.

(Nedeljković, 2023, p. 71)

In that sense, the role of journalists is also changing from *watchdog* to *guide-dog*, who practically leads the audience through a sea of available content to what is assessed as most interesting based on analytics – and conflicts, as already highlighted, traditionally generate great interest.

Given that war reporting can easily turn into sensationalistic due to commercial, political and other interests, a counter-approach is needed, which, among other things, includes: stories focused on peace initiatives and reducing ethnic and religious tensions; an analytical approach when processing topics; taking into account the structure of society in conflict; and promoting conflict resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation (Gal-tung, 2003). Unlike war journalism, which can often be trivial in the sense of presenting a black-and-white picture of the world where one side always wins and the other always loses, peace journalism emphasises an analytical approach. Peace journalism is not focused solely on the current conflict, but also seeks out the underlying causes:

Like public journalism and development journalism, peace journalism is grounded in communication philosophy—namely the commitment to the idea of civic participation, the understanding of social justice as a moral imperative, and the view that the value and sacredness of the individual are realised only in and through communities.

(Fong, 2009, p. 19)

In peace journalism, the cultural and historical context is explored, a voice is given to all sides, including those most affected by the conflict. The selection and processing of topics is based on the idea that peace is the final solution. This is achieved by reporting on topics that emphasise similarities rather than differences among conflicting parties, giving media space to those who promote peace initiatives, pointing out the consequences that war has on ordinary people, and the like. Taking all of this into account, researcher Teresa Nicolás Gavilán proposes four normative points of peace journalism:

1. The journalist must, first and foremost, thoroughly study and analyse the conflict in order to report on violence factually. This analysis must include the roots and causes, as well as the cultural, social, and political context through which the conflicting parties and their goals are presented.

2. Reporting needs to be oriented towards resolving the conflict by giving space to proposals, negotiations, and agreements aimed at peace.

3. Journalists should seek the truth in a symmetrical manner, meaning that reality is not presented according to the standards of one side.

4. Reporting must include the voice of ordinary people, not just elites. (Gavilán, 2011, p. 4).

Using the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, the main focus of this article is to examine the perspectives and elements of peace journalism on the example of the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Serbian media practice, as this region itself has been historically marked by numerous conflicts.

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this article is to examine the reporting in Serbian media about the current conflict between Israel and Palestine, which began on October 7 with a surprise attack by the terrorist organisation Hamas on Israel, in which nearly 1,200 people were killed and 251 people were kidnapped<sup>1</sup>. The response of Israel was an intense bombing and invasion of Gaza, with the stated aim of destroying Hamas and freeing the hostages<sup>2</sup>. An escalation of the conflict followed, and it is still ongoing today. Given that this territory is marked by decades of conflict between the aforementioned parties, which attracts significant attention from the international public, we wanted to examine how the current conflict is presented in the media in a country that itself has a conflict-ridden past.

Considering that the media play a significant role in both fuelling and mitigating conflict, the starting point of this article is the following research question:

RQ1: To what extent and in what way are the elements of peace journalism, as opposed to the elements of war journalism, present in Serbian media practice in reporting about contemporary armed conflicts?

This will primarily be examined through a comparative analysis and a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative analysis is based on five opposing indicators that define the categories of war and peace journalism, which have been previously used in the work Nicole Yang Lai Fong (2009), which are based on Johan Galtung's studies related to the peace journalism. Each analysed text was coded with an appropriate category.

The corpus consists of texts published at the beginning of the conflict, from October 7 to October 13, 2023, as well as texts published in the period from April 22 to April 28, 2024, in order to establish an adequate time distance between the beginning and the middle phase of the conflict. In this way, through comparative analysis, it is possible to determine any changes in reporting patterns on this conflict.

The texts published in the online editions of the daily newspapers *Kurir* and *Danas* were analysed. These media outlets were selected because *Kurir* is a tabloid and therefore geared towards sensationalist reporting, while *Danas* profiles itself as a quality and serious media outlet, which are significant factors for comparative analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> See at the link: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/7/hamas-says-it-has-enough-israeli-captives-to-free-all-palestinian-prisoners> (Last accessed on May 9, 2025)

<sup>2</sup> See at the link: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-says-idf-will-control-gaza-after-war-rejects-notion-of-international-force/> (Last accessed on May 9, 2025)

*Table 1. Methodological framework for quantitative analysis*

War Journalism	Peace Journalism
<i>Elite-oriented</i> (Focuses on leaders and elites as actors and sources of information)	<i>People-oriented</i> (Focuses on common people as actors and sources of information)
<i>Differences-oriented</i> (Reports on areas of differences that might lead to a worsening of conflict)	<i>Reports the areas of agreement</i> (Reports on areas that might lead to a solution to the conflict)
<i>Focuses on here and now</i> (Neither reports on factors contributing to conflicts nor consequences of it. Only reports about what, who, where and when of an event)	<i>Reports causes and consequences</i> (Reports on factors contributing to conflicts as well as consequences of it)
<i>Dichotomises the good and bad</i> (Points finger at other quarters as responsible for issue)	<i>Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys</i> (Does not point fingers at other quarters as responsible of the issue)
<i>Partisan</i> (Biased to one side of conflict)	<i>Non-partisan</i> (Neutral and not taking sides)

The unit of analysis is the journalistic text. All texts available in the online archives of these media outlets for the specified dates on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were analysed.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the total number of published texts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the analysed period in October, at the beginning of the conflict, 303 texts were detected on the *Kurir* portal, and 104 articles on the *Danas* portal. Considering that *Kurir* is tabloid-oriented, a larger number of texts was expected, given that tabloid reporting is based on sensationalism, which is a frequent approach when it comes to reporting on conflicts by such media.

In the analysed period six months after the first, only 11 texts were detected on the *Danas* portal and 9 articles were detected on the *Kurir* portal.

Each of the detected texts was coded in accordance with the indicators specified in the methodological section to determine the extent to which elements of peace journalism are present in such articles versus elements of war journalism. The following results were obtained.

Table 2. Indicators of war journalism and peace journalism on the Kurir portal in October 2023

<i>Kurir</i> (October 7 - 13, 2023)			
Elite-oriented	212 (70%)	91 (30%)	People-oriented
Differences-oriented	294 (97%)	9 (3%)	Reports the areas of agreement
Focuses on here and now	286 (94.5%)	17 (5.5%)	Reports causes and consequences
Dichotomises the good and bad	268 (88.5%)	35 (11.5%)	Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys
Partisan	212 (70%)	91 (30%)	Non-partisan
<b>Indicators typical of war journalism</b>	<b>1272 (84%)</b>	<b>243 (16%)</b>	<b>Indicators typical of peace journalism</b>

The results showed that the majority of texts from the *Kurir* portal contain elements typical of war journalism. Out of a total of 1515 analysed indicators (each of the 303 texts were coded with 5 indicators), it was found that in 84% of cases they contain elements of war journalism. When it comes to individual categories of opposing indicators, a significant percentage of elements typical of peace journalism were detected in two indicators: *People-oriented* and *Non-partisan* (both at 30%). The indicators *Differences-oriented* and *Focuses on here and now* are almost in absolute majority (97% and 94.5%) as opposed to the indicators *Reports the areas of agreement* and *Reports causes and consequences*. Texts that include the indicator *Dichotomises the good and bad* are also in the majority (88.5%) as opposed to the indicator *Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys*. Based on the presented data, we can conclude that in the analysed period, the largest number of texts contain characteristics typical of war journalism, both in the total number and in individual categories.

The qualitative analysis showed that the headlines themselves on the *Kurir* portal can be qualified as sensationalist, which is expected since it is a tabloid. However, this principle of writing headlines is not in line with the concept of peace journalism. In the text published on October 7, 2023, under the title “HAMAS HAS A SNEAKY TACTIC, ISRAEL IS POWERLESS AGAINST THIS! Analysis of hell: It is forgotten that above the SECRET SERVICES stand POLITICS!”<sup>3</sup>, the use of capital letters is noticeable, which reinforces the sensationalist tone. Furthermore, given that the source is not cited, it can be concluded that the views expressed in the headline are interpreted as a factual situation or the editorial stance, which indicates bias in reporting. Although the text mostly relies on statements from Israeli officials (Elite-oriented), the author’s bias is also visible in the text itself through comments, descriptions, and subheadings such as: “Im-

<sup>3</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4260962/hamas-ima-podmuklu-taktiku> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

ages that Israel did not expect even in its worst nightmare” or “ Hamas’ evil tactic.” This text, which fully characterises one-sided reporting, is also an example of three more indicators: *Differences-oriented*, *Focuses on here and now*, and *Dichotomises the good and bad* (one side is labelled as righteous, and the other as a criminal). Based on this example, we can conclude that all analysed indicators belong to the category of war journalism - the sources of information are elites, not ordinary people; the focus is on the differences between the warring parties; the author of the text exclusively deals with current events, without an analytical approach; the text is characterised by the author’s dominant bias, as well as a simplified good-bad polarisation.

A sensationalist approach is also noticeable in the text published on October 8th under the title “DISTURBING! FATHER SAVED FAMILY IN ISRAEL AND THEN GOT A BULLET: Terrible sight BRINGS TEARS TO THE EYES! He managed to get them all out, but... VIDEO.”<sup>4</sup> Although this text is an example of the indicator *People-oriented*, an increased emotional component is noticeable with the aim of provoking strong emotional reactions, which is typical for tabloids. The text itself is reduced to retelling a video that appeared on social media, which shows the evacuation of a family from a certain area and the death of a member of that family. Despite the fact that showing disturbing scenes, which include explicit scenes of murder, is not in accordance with ethical standards, tabloids regularly use them to monetise their own content. Given that the commercial aspect is a priority for tabloids even in times of crisis, the implementation of peace journalism indicators is further hindered - even when some of the indicators are present.

In the analysed period, the indicator *Reports the areas of agreement* was detected in the smallest number of texts. In the Sport section on October 9, an article titled “MUSLIM, AND CAPTAIN OF ISRAEL! The miraculous life story of Bibars Natcho: I am a Circassian, a Muslim, and I cannot sing the anthem”<sup>5</sup> was published. The number and content of such texts show that they are the exception, not the rule. The text is about a football player who, despite being of Muslim faith and born on the territory of Palestine, successfully integrated into Israeli society and reached the position of captain of the national football team. However, in addition to the sensationalist headline, the text itself emphasises that the Muslim group to which this football player belongs differs significantly from those in the surrounding area: “His national minority in Israel enjoys great privileges because throughout history it helped Jews defend themselves from various plagues from the neighbourhood.” Based on this, it can be concluded that

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<sup>4</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4261522/otac-izvukao-celu-porodicu-pa-dobio-metak-u-izraelu> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

<sup>5</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/sport/fudbal/4262100/zivotna-prica-bibarsa-natha> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

this approach does not fundamentally contribute to bringing the warring parties closer, but is used for additional value framing.

One of the rare examples of texts in which the author deals with causes and consequences, rather than current events, is the text published on October 8 under the title: “WHAT IS THE GAZA STRIP? A territory the size of Belgrade where MILLIONS live, ruled by shortages, unemployment and RADICAL ISLAM (VIDEO).”<sup>6</sup> Despite the sensationalist headline, the text provides a brief insight into the history of this area (“In the 20th century, Gaza came under Egyptian rule in 1948, shortly after the proclamation of the State of Israel. The territory was then occupied by Israel after the Arab-Israeli war in 1967”). This places the war in an appropriate historical context, which helps readers to better understand the complexity of the situation on the ground. Given that no journalist subjectivity was detected in this text in terms of glorifying one side and demonising the other, this text is an example of two more indicators - *Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys* and *Non-partisan*.

Sensationalism is also reflected in the choice of topics, so on October 9, a text was published under the title “BILLIONAIRE KYLIE IN THE MIDST OF SCANDAL DUE TO DELETED POST ABOUT ISRAEL! They accuse her of collecting points! Celebrities are getting louder! (PHOTO)”<sup>7</sup> which is about the reaction of celebrities from the world of entertainment. More precisely - a translation of their comments from social media is given. This shifts the topic of war into the field of entertainment, and thus relativises everything that war essentially represents. Moreover, this type of reporting implies that the opinion of the rich and famous who have no connection to the war is more important than the victims of the war. This is supported by the text published on October 11 under the title “THEY CALLED IT THE BEVERLY HILLS OF GAZA, NOW IT’S RAZED TO THE GROUND! See what the place where the LUX VILLAS of Hamas leaders once stood looks like”<sup>8</sup> in which the focus is again on the rich, or the elite and material losses, and not human lives. It shows that sensationalism is valued above the horrors of war, and such an approach to reporting and framing the conflict does not contribute to the development of peace journalism.

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<sup>6</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4261296/sta-je-pojas-gaze-teritorija-velicine-beograda-u-kojoj-zive-milioni-a-vladaju-nestasic-nezaposlenost-i-radikalni-islam-video> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

<sup>7</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/zabava/pop-kultura/4262106/da-li-poznate-licnosti-podrzavaju-izrael-ili-palestinu> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

<sup>8</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4263642/ovako-izgleda-beverli-hils-gaze-posle-raketiranja> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

Table 3. Indicators of war journalism and peace journalism on the *Danas* portal in October 2023

<i>Danas</i> (October 7 - 13, 2023)			
Elite-oriented	92 (88.5%)	12 (11.5%)	People-oriented
Differences-oriented	101 (97%)	3 (3%)	Reports the areas of agreement
Focuses on here and now	98 (94%)	6 (6%)	Reports causes and consequences
Dichotomises the good and bad	79 (76%)	25 (24%)	Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys
Partisan	7 (7%)	97 (93%)	Non-partisan
<b>Indicators typical of war journalism</b>	<b>377 (72.5%)</b>	<b>143 (27.5%)</b>	<b>Indicators typical of peace journalism</b>

The results showed that even on the *Danas* portal, which is considered a serious and professional news outlet, war journalism indicators are more prevalent than peace journalism indicators (72.5% versus 27.5%). However, war journalism indicators are present to a slightly lesser extent compared to the *Kurir* portal, which is a tabloid (72.5% versus 84%). It should also be emphasised that a significantly smaller number of texts were detected on the *Danas* portal compared to the *Kurir* one (104 versus 303). Regarding other indicators, the analysis showed that the largest number of texts are oriented towards elites, as well as towards differences between warring parties and current events (88.5%; 97% and 94%). Compared to the *Kurir* portal, texts oriented towards good-bad polarisation are represented to a slightly lesser extent (76% versus 88.5%). The main difference compared to the *Kurir* portal is the relation between the indicators *Partisan* and *Non-partisan*. On the *Danas* portal, 93% of texts were marked as predominantly non-partisan, as opposed to 30%, which was the case on the *Kurir* portal. This is also the only category in which indicators typical for peace journalism are predominantly present.

In qualitative analysis, it was found that despite the higher presence of war journalism indicators, *Danas* in most cases cultivates an apparently neutral tone of reporting, which signals that such an approach can also contain some bias. That is the case with the text published on October 7 under the title: “Israel and Palestine: At least 22 dead, 545 wounded, ‘we are at war,’ says Netanyahu after rocket attacks from Gaza.”<sup>9</sup> Unlike in *Kurir*, there are no capital letters in the headline, which are a characteristic of sensationalism. However, the sources of information are elites, which is a characteristic of war journalism, and predominantly from the Israeli side,

<sup>9</sup> See at the link: <https://www.danas.rs/bbc-news-serbian/izrael-i-palestina-najmanje-22-mrtvih-545-ranjenih-u-ratu-smo-kaze-netanjahu-posle-raketnih-iz-gaze/> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

which is presented as the victim in this conflict. In spite of efforts to maintain neutrality, which is the dominant feature of this text, an attachment to one side is noticeable, as illustrated by the following example in which the word unprecedented is emphasised: “In an unprecedented attack, Palestinian militants crossed the fence that separates the Gaza Strip in the early morning, while dozens of rockets were fired from this territory.” Like most texts in the analysed period, this one is oriented towards differences, deals with current events, and polarisation is present.

It was highlighted earlier in this article that on the *Danas* portal, unlike the *Kurir* portal, a smaller number of texts focusing on ordinary people was detected. The lack of such texts shifts the war from the field of real life experience and suffering to the field of the political arena. Even the text that contains the indicator *People-oriented*, published on October 7 under the title: “Shop in Gaza sells perfumes in metal bottles shaped like rockets fired at Israel,”<sup>10</sup> is characterised by a sensationalist approach. “Customers looking for a new fragrance can choose ‘KN-103’ or the spring ‘Burak-100’ - depending on the packaging - the type of extremist rocket,” which trivialises the horrors of war. In addition to the fact that this approach is not characteristic of professional media, this choice of topic and way of reporting further reinforce stereotypes about the Other, which in the specific media discourse is labelled as the aggressor. It should be also noted that this text is not detected in tabloid-oriented *Kurir*.

Given that, in the analysed period, the *Danas* portal mostly republished texts from domestic and foreign news agencies, whose focus is on current information, texts dealing with the similarities of the warring parties are almost non-existent. However, in the text published on October 10, under the title: “This is perhaps Israel’s biggest intelligence failure, Hamas has its sponsors in Iran and Russia: Political scientist Kladničanin for *Danas* on the latest Israeli-Palestinian conflict,”<sup>11</sup> in the form of an interview with a political scientist Fahrudin Kladničanin, an expert analysis of the conflict is presented, which allows readers to learn something new and better understand the warring parties. Explaining the context of this conflict, Kladničanin, speaking about Hamas, among other things, says: “A good part of Palestinians have problems with them, because their mission is to create an image as the only savior of the Palestinian people. Some of the leading Palestinian leaders, Yasser Arafat, as well as Muhammad Abbas, had a critical attitude towards them.” In addition to providing a historical context, this statement makes a clear distinction between members of Hamas and the residents of Palestine, which is important for understanding the current situation and the fact that the victims are not only on one side.

<sup>10</sup> See at the link: <https://www.danas.rs/svet/radnja-u-gazi-prodaje-parfeme-u-metalnim-bocicama-u-obliku-raketa-ispaljenih-na-izrael/> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

<sup>11</sup> See at the link: <https://www.danas.rs/svet/kladnicanin-za-danas-hamas-izrael/> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

Therefore, this text can serve as an example for two more observed indicators - *Reports causes and consequences* and *Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys*. Additionally, this example demonstrates that the absence or incomparably smaller amount of original content compared to taken or recycled content is also a significant factor influencing the dominance of war journalism. The fact that the analysed media predominantly take content from news agencies and other sources, while their original journalistic content is incomparably fewer, realistically limits the possibility of reporting in a way that is defined as peace journalism. This requires much more analysis and interpretation, which also means original sources and interviewees consulted for the purpose of providing analytical texts and deeper context.

Table 4. Indicators of war journalism and peace journalism on the Kurir portal in April 2024

<i>Kurir</i> (April 22 - 28, 2024)			
Elite-oriented	6 (66,5%)	3 (33,5%)	People-oriented
Differences-oriented	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	Reports the areas of agreement
Focuses on here and now	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	Reports causes and consequences
Dichotomises the good and bad	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys
Partisan	3 (33,5%)	6 (66,5%)	Non-partisan
<b>Indicators typical of war journalism</b>	<b>36 (80%)</b>	<b>9 (20%)</b>	<b>Indicators typical of peace journalism</b>

As highlighted earlier in the article, during the research period conducted six months later, a total of 20 articles were detected - 9 on the *Kurir* portal and 11 on the *Danas* portal. Based on this data, it is not possible to draw significant statistical conclusions, except that interest in this topic has drastically declined in mainstream media. When it comes to *Kurir*, a relation between the indicators remained relatively the same. Indicators typical of war journalism are present in majority in this analysed period as well, compared to the indicators typical of peace journalism (80% versus 20%). It should also be noted that indicators *Differences-oriented*, *Focuses on here and now* and *Dichotomises the good and bad* are present in 100% of cases.

*Kurir* retained a sensationalist approach in creating headlines, while the focus in topic selection mostly shifted to events in Palestine and international reactions. Thus, on April 24 a text was published under the title: "JAMAICA RECOGNISED PALESTINE: 'The decision is in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations!' Here's how many countries have done it so far"<sup>12</sup> in which a report on Jamaica's recognition of Palestine

<sup>12</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4382838/jamajka-priznala-palestinu-odluka-je-u-skladu-sa-poveljom-ujedinjenih-nacija> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

was conveyed in a neutral and informative tone. This approach was maintained in all articles whose topic was international reactions, but in a text about the situation on the ground, sensationalism continued to be dominant. In the text titled “HEARTBREAKING: Baby rescued by doctors from dead mother in Gaza dies!”<sup>13</sup> published on April 26, the tragedy of a family that lost their lives in the war is exploited with disturbing details that amplify the emotional reaction: “The girl’s name was Sabrin Ru, and she was named after her mother Sabrin al-Sakani al-Sheikh, along with whom her husband Shukri and three-year-old daughter Malak were also killed in the attack. Doctors performed a caesarean section on the woman who was 30 weeks pregnant and who was fatally injured in an Israeli air strike” the text states, among other things. Given the reduced quantity of texts compared to the first analysed period, this text represents the model by which topics that appeared on the portal’s pages were selected - extreme cases of suffering and violence escalation packaged in a sensationalist framework.

Table 5. Indicators of war journalism and peace journalism on the Danas portal in April 2024

<i>Danas</i> (April 22 - 28, 2024)			
Elite-oriented	10 (91%)	1 (9%)	People-oriented
Differences-oriented	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	Reports the areas of agreement
Focuses on here and now	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	Reports causes and consequences
Dichotomises the good and bad	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	Avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys
Partisan	0 (0%)	11 (100%)	Non-partisan
<b>Indicators typical of war journalism</b>	<b>40 (73%)</b>	<b>15 (27%)</b>	<b>Indicators typical of peace journalism</b>

Regarding the *Danas* portal, similar percentage relations between the indicators are present in this analysed period compared to the previous one. War journalism indicators are more prevalent than peace journalism indicators (73% versus 27%). Percentages are almost identical compared to the first analysed period. (72.5 versus 27.5%) It should be noted that all analysed texts contain the following indicators: *Differences-oriented* and *Focuses on here*. As in the case of the *Kurir* portal, this can be connected to the editorial criteria of choosing topics related to the conflict that would be published. Finally, all analysed texts contain a neutral approach towards reporting.

This news outlet also focuses on international reactions and the situation in the Gaza Strip. Thus, on April 23, a Fonet agency text was pub-

<sup>13</sup> See at the link: <https://www.kurir.rs/planeta/4384059/potresno-preminula-beba-koju-sulekari-spasili-iz-mrtve-majke-u-gazi> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

lished about the discovery of a mass grave under the title: “310 bodies found in a mass grave under a hospital in Gaza.”<sup>14</sup> The text is largely based on statements from United Nations officials based on data from the field, which legitimises this information. Among other things, the following statement was conveyed: “Some of them had their hands tied, which indicates serious violations of international law and international humanitarian law, so further investigations are necessary, said Shamdasani”. No additional details were provided beyond the official statements, which shows a tendency to avoid sensationalism. However, the number of texts published on the *Danas* portal in this analysed period shows us that there is also a sensationalist approach in the choice of topic, that is, information from this conflict area will appear in Serbian media only in the case of extreme escalations, which does not contribute to the development of peace journalism, even by professional media.

### CONCLUSION

Starting from the first research question which asks *to what extent and in what way the elements of peace journalism, as opposed to the elements of war journalism, are present in Serbian media practice in reporting about contemporary armed conflicts*, we can conclude that indicators typical of peace journalism are significantly less present compared to indicators typical of war journalism - regardless of whether the text is published in tabloids or professional media. The key difference between these two types of media is that professional media mostly cultivate impartiality in reporting, which is not the case with tabloids.

It should be emphasised that the concept of peace journalism does not imply a desirable or recommended model when reporting on war, as that would violate the concept and idea of journalism itself and objectivity as its principal ideal. However, considering that journalism can never be fully objective, there needs to be a balance between the present indicators of war and peace journalism, and such balance currently does not exist. One of the main reasons, as the qualitative analysis has shown, certainly lies in the fact that sensationalism is still the primary approach when it comes to reporting on such topics. Although this is a typical approach for tabloids, the analysis has shown that it is also present in so-called serious and professional media. It has also been observed that sensationalism is not necessarily limited to the content of the texts themselves, but also to the choice of topics, which also affects how the public perceives war.

Certainly, the financial aspect should also be taken into account in this context. In an oversaturated market, media outlets race to monetise

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<sup>14</sup> See at the link: <https://www.danas.rs/svet/pronadjeno-310-tela-u-masovnoj-grobnici-ispod-bolnice-u-gazi/> (last accessed on March 24, 2025)

their content as much as possible. This results with speed becoming the primary criteria for reporting and publishing articles. In such conditions, it is difficult to develop analytical journalistic forms that are not only crucial for increasing the informative value and further understanding the cultural and socio-historical context of the warring parties, but also for developing empathy, which is an essential component of peace journalism.

In such circumstances, violations of codes and ethical principles often accompany the work that is called journalistic in the modern age. Furthermore, inadequate preparation for reporting in crisis and conflict situations is also a factor that affects the media product, which is often approached superficially, sensationally, and with vested interests.

News factors, mentioned in the theoretical framework, certainly contribute to the obtained results, along with the fact that domestic media do not have their own on-the-ground correspondents/reporters. This limits the possibility of focusing on people, so the media primarily rely on official sources which, as a rule, fall within the domain of an elite-oriented approach.

Given that Serbia is itself a conflict area due to its not-so-distant past, developing the concept of peace journalism represents a challenge. When the entire discourse is based on conflict and divisions, it is reflected in media content. Therefore, it is important to have media pluralism and for the media to be a platform through which dialogue, tolerance, understanding of the Other, and empathy are promoted. It's certain that without these prerequisites, peace journalism cannot exist.

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**ЕЛЕМЕНТИ МИРОВОГ НОВИНАРСТВА  
У СРПСКИМ МЕДИЈИМА – СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА:  
ИЗВЕШТАВАЊЕ ПОРТАЛА ДАНАСИ КУРИР  
О СУКОБУ ИЗРАЕЛА И ПАЛЕСТИНЕ**

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**Резиме**

У овом раду испитивани су елементи мировног новинарства и перспективе за развој овог концепта у српској медијској пракси на основу теоријских поставки Јохана Галдунга, принципа објективности у новинарству и теорије уоквиравања. За студију случаја узет је актуелни сукоб Израела и Палестине, односно како је овај конфликт представљен у једном таблоидном (*Курир*) и једном медију који се профилише као озбиљан и професионалан (*Данас*). С обзиром на то да вишедеценијски конфликти између поменутих страна привлачи велику пажњу међународне јавности, желели смо да испитамо на који начин је актуелни сукоб представљен у медијима у земљи која и сама има конфликтну прошлост.

Полазна тачка овог рада јесте истраживачко питање: У којој мери и на који начин су елементи мировног новинарства, за разлику од елемената ратног новинарства, при-

сутни у српској медијској пракси приликом извештавања о савременим оружаним сукобима?

То је, првенствено, испитано кроз компаративну анализу и квантитативну и квалитативну анализу садржаја. Квантитативна анализа се заснива на пет супротстављених индикатора типичних за ратно и мировно новинарство, који су претходно коришћени у раду Никол Јанг Лаи Фонг (Nicole Young Lai Fong), 2009. Ти индикатори су: Оријентисаност на елиту насупротив оријентисаности на људе; Оријентисаност на разлике насупротив извештавању о областима слагања; Фокусирање на овде и сада насупротив извештавању о узроцима и последицама; Дихотомизација доброг и лошег насупротив избегавању етикетирања добрих и лоших момака; Пристрасни насупротив непристрасном приступу представљања конфликта.

Резултати су показали да су индикатори карактеристични за мировно новинарство у значајно мањој мери заступљени у односу на индикаторе карактеристичне за ратно новинарство - без обзира на то да ли је реч о таблоидима или професионалним медијима. Кључна разлика између ове две врсте медија јесте у томе што професионални медији у највећој мери негују непристрасност у извештавању, што није случај са таблоидима. Сензационализам је и даље примарни критеријум приликом извештавања о оваквим темама. Иако је ово карактеристичан приступ за таблоиде, анализа је показала да је присутан и у такозваним озбиљним и професионалним медијима. Такође је примећено да сензационализам није нужно ограничен на сам садржај текстова, већ и на избор тема, што, такође, утиче на то како јавност перципира рат. Имајући у виду да је Србија због своје не тако давне прошлости и сама конфликтно подручје, развијање концепта мировног новинарства постаје додатни изазов. Када је целокупан дискурс заснован на конфликту и поделама, то се, неминовно, одражава и кроз медијске садржаје.