Framing and Agenda Setting of the Day of Republika Srpska and its 2016 Referendum

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to explore broadsheet newspaper framing and agenda-setting of two events using the five-frame model developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). This article provides insight into how the leading broadsheet newspaper within BiH's Republika Srpska frames relationships between the three main ethnic groups and is the first such study to occur in BiH. By identifying and exploring the most common frames in Glas Srpske during the five-year period (from 31 December 2015 to 30 December 2020), the research is meant to answer the following research questions: How does Glas Srpske frame the conversation about it and portray the Day of Republika Srpska (RS) and Referendum of the RS Day? The results, which find Attribution of Responsibility and Conflict frames to be the more prevalent in Glas Srpske, illustrate contentious politics that reinforce differences between ethnic groups in BiH. These events and the controversial narrative surrounding them are relevant more than ever in the light of the recent non-paper 'Western Balkans – A Way Forward'.*

Keywords: ***Bosnia and Herzegovina, framing, agenda-setting, Day of Republika Srpska, RS Day referendum,*** **Glas Srpske,** ***non-paper***

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore broadsheet newspaper framing of two events using the five-frame model originally developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). This provides insight into how the main broadsheet newspaper within Bosnia and Herzegovina's two Entities frames relationships between

the three main ethnic groups[1] in the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is comprised of two Entities: Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of BiH or FBiH). Along with the two Entities, the country also has an autonomous self-governing administrative unit under the sovereignty of the state of BiH: the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Brčko District). The focus of this article is within RS and the main broadsheet newspaper, *Glas Srpske* (*'Voice of Srpska'*). The research findings are then couched within the leaked 'non-paper' (Cirman – Vuković 2021) of April 2021 – allegedly written by the prime minister of Slovenia – that caused a firestorm across BiH and the wider Western Balkan region, as it suggested the dissolution of BiH as well as major reorganisation of other countries in the Western Balkans along ethnic lines.

In order to understand RS, we must first understand the environment in which it arose. BiH was one of six constituent republics that comprised the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFR Yugoslavia), which was a one--party, socialist federal state. BiH held its first democratic multi-party election in December 1990 while still part of SFR Yugoslavia; the overwhelming majority of votes were cast for the main ethnic-nationalist parties: the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ-BiH; Croat), the Party of Democratic Action (SDA; Bosniak) and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS; Serb). On 14 October 1991, the SDS deputies left the Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina due to a plan to vote on Bosnian-Herzegovinian legislative sovereignty within Yugoslavia (but not independence). After the SDS departure from the Assembly of BiH, HDZ-BiH and SDA deputies voted in favour of legislative sovereignty. Several days later, the SDS proclaimed a Serb National Assembly, located in Banja Luka (Malcolm 2002: 228).

On 9 January 1992, the Serb National Assembly declared the creation of the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would be an integral part of Yugoslavia (Malcolm 2002). The Serb National Assembly adopted a 'Declaration to Proclaim the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina', which would cover the areas of 'Serb autonomous regions and areas, and other Serb ethnic units in BiH' (Venice Commission 2013: 5). The name was changed to 'Republika Srpska' in August 1992 (Cigar – Williams 2002). The day after the Serb National Assembly adopted its constitution, BiH held a two-day vote (29 February – 1 March 1992) on independence from Yugoslavia.[2] BiH declared its independence in March 1992 and the European Community recognised its independence on 6 April 1992. The same day, the Siege of Sarajevo began, and the war had started.

1 Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs.

2 The referendum asked: "Are you in favour of a sovereign and independent Bosnia-Herzegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, and others who live in it?" Out of the 63.6% constituents who cast their vote, 99.7% voted for independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many Bosnian-Serbs boycotted the referendum (Björ drkdahl 2018).

The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, better known as the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords (DPA), brought the three and a half year Bosnian War to an end. It established the current consociational (Lijphart 1977) ethnic power-sharing arrangement as well as the de-facto partition of BiH (Malcolm 2002: 270) between the Bosnian-Serbs and the Bosniaks/Croats through the creation of two Entities: Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH. Maksic (2009) argues that the 1995 DPA transformed BiH into 'a weak union of two deeply autonomous ethno-territories' (p. 4), which 'legalized and legitimized' (Björkdahl 2018: 38) Republika Srpska.[3] According to Toal (2013), the peace accords 'institutionalized an ethno-territorial division of BiH organized around war territories, locking nationalist antagonism into the very structure of the state' (p. 199). Although it institutionalised ethnic division, it also promoted the return of refugees and displaced persons to their pre-war homes, through Annex VII.

Literature Review

Mass media has four main roles in a democratic society (Voltmer 2006): (1) inform the citizenry; (2) put forth issues of debate; (3) serve as a 'watchdog' against the government; and (4) *vox populi*. In the American context, Cook (1998) refers to the news media as the fourth branch of government. For societies in transition, the importance of the 'watchdog' role cannot be overstated; according to Voltmer (2006: 5), this is because one of the main tasks of democratisation is to establish mechanisms that hold political elites accountable, and thus responsive, to the citizenry.

The theory of media dependency states that for societies in transition or facing instability, citizens are more reliant on mass media for information, and as such are more susceptible to their effects (Loveless 2008: 162). Individual citizens of the mass public '…can become dependent on a particular medium for their information and that people dependent on different media tend to have different pictures of the world' (Loveless 2008: 166). Schmitt-Beck (1999: 222), argues that what the mass media '…tell us about the "world outside" becomes the foundation of the "pictures in our heads" – the beliefs and opinions, for example, upon which we act…'. When citizens become reliant on a particular medium and source for their information, they tend to have different views of the political world.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) argue that the mass media plays an important role in public opinion formation – in what the authors call the 'agenda-setting function' of the mass media – as well (p. 176). They state that the audiences not

3 The other entity, the Federation of BiH, was created via the 1994 Washington Agreement, which brought an end to the Muslim-Croat War (June 1992 to February 1994; Ramet 2002: 216–217).

only learn about a given issue, but also how much importance they should attach to said issue; this importance is derived from the amount of information in a news story and its position on the issue in question. The way in which the media frames an issue, the amount of time spent covering it and any opinions (biases) given towards the issue at hand all play an important role in public opinion formation. Zaller (1996) is a proponent of mass media effects, and argues that the mass media affects public opinion development on political events and personalities. For Zaller (1996), mass media influence consists more in telling people *what to think about* rather than telling them *what to think*. The way an issue is framed has an effect on how individuals perceive and explain national issues. Nelson et al. (1997) found that the manner in which a news outlet framed a specific event had an effect on how the news event was perceived by the public. Similarly, Hall (1997) and Mendelsohn (1993) find that the way specific events are described, framed and presented is of significance because the media helps construct an individual's understanding of specific events. In the case of referenda framing, Dekavalla (2016) found that Scottish newspapers framed the 2014 Scottish independence referendum through the lens of policy and political competition (i.e., elections) rather than the frame of constitutionalism or the right of self-determination. Noelle-Neumann (1974) takes media framing further than the other authors who advocate it; she claims that the mass media are the *creators* of public opinion. Other scholars have dismissed mass media effects in favour of 'minimal effects' (e.g., Bennett – Iyengar 2008; McGuire 1986; Newton 2006).

Regarding newspaper readership in the former SFR Yugoslavia, there was no true national (pan-Yugoslav) news media, with the exception of *Borba.*[4] Rather, the mass media was controlled at the individual republican or provincial level by the respective republican or provincial communist party. The consequence of this was that as the decentralisation of SFR Yugoslavia took place (most notably via the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution), the individual broadsheet newspapers delineated along republican lines – increasingly gearing their news stories toward their respective republican or provincial audiences (Robinson 1977: 192–199). According to Ramet (2002), one cannot overemphasise the importance of the fragmentation of broadsheet newspaper readership along republican and ethno-national lines in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) in contributing to increasing tensions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She argues that:

> [w]ith Bosnian Croats reading *Vjesnik* and *Večernji list*, Bosnian Serbs reading *Politika* and *Politika ekspres*, and Bosnian Muslims reading *Oslobodjenje*, the growing divergences in the points of view among the respective media were

4 *Borba* was the official newspaper of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

> very quickly reflected in growing divergences in the perspectives of the three largest nationality groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Ramet 2002: 41).

Since the end of the war in 1995, BiH has had three main broadsheet newspapers that cater to the three main ethnic communities: *Dnevni avaz* (Bosniak), *Dnevni list* (Croat) and *Glas Srpske* (Serb). This segmented media market is conducive to the promotion and continuation of ethnic nationalism. According to Snyder and Ballentine (1996), the main reason for this is that segmented media markets incentivise political elites'… to promote nationalist populism as a substitute for true democratization' (p. 19). Sivac-Bryant (2008: 107) concurs, arguing that nationalist political parties and the mass media continue their dominance of the public discourse, thus preventing true democratisation and consolidation to occur. The challenge, according to the USAID 'Strengthening Independent Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina Project' (2013: 1) is that journalists'… adhere to "patriotism" rather than professionalism, and serve mostly special interests – not the public. The lack of professional and unbiased media prevents constructive public dialogue and further development of democracy' in the country. The divisive role of the media is a serious issue that the USAID has been working on, stating that BiH is facing '…an increase in nationalistic rhetoric in political discourse and the media, which greatly influences public sentiment and attitudes' (2013: 1). This biased and ethno-centric media is not fulfilling one of the key roles of the mass media for societies in transition: the 'watchdog' role (Voltmer 2006: 5), which is supposed to hold all political elites accountable to the citizenry. In BiH, this may decrease the process of ethnic reconciliation and even democratisation.

Broadsheet newspapers in BiH present the academic and policy communities prime ground for discourse analysis due to its segmented media market. According to Boreus and Bergström (2017: 8), 'discourse analysis is used to study the ideational aspects of texts.' Media discourse analysis in this fragmented society allows us to explore possible change of foci or ideological changes over time via the use of specific key words, which will be explained in the data and methodology section.

The 'Day of Republika Srpska' Holiday and its 2016 Referendum

The Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina was declared on 9 January 1992 by the Serb National Assembly, prior to the start of the Bosnian War. The date also coincides with St. Stephen's Day, which is an Orthodox Christian holiday. Saint Stephen (in Serbian: *Sveti Stefan*) is also the patron saint of Republika Srpska. According to Bishop Jefrem, 'It is difficult to choose a better heavenly protector of Republika Srpska than Saint Stephen the Archdeacon, who preached the truth, suffered for the truth and in the end won' (Orthodox

Times 2021). Furthermore, Stanić (2019) argues that Serbs bear a very close resemblance to Saint Stephen by stating: 'Like this saint, our people have been accused of many things, many false witnesses have testified against us' (Kulaga – Momic 2020: 2–3). Lastly, Milorad Dodik, who is the current Serb member of BiH's tripartite presidency (and former President of Republika Srpska) stresses the right of RS to celebrate its holidays while describing RS as 'a Christian country and the country of the Serbian people where all other peoples can live as well' (Agencija 2020: 2). Thus, the date appears only to have symbolism related to the Serbs and Serbian Orthodox traditions, which ultimately reflects a Serb-centric view of the entity and potential desire for statehood. Apart from the symbolism, the date seemed to have a practical purpose as well. According to Biserko (2006), Radovan Karadžić[5] stated:

> We hurried to declare a republic on January 9 because of the possibility that the European Community would declare the independence of BiH on January 10. In order for that manipulation not to take place, we had to react immediately. After the recognition, any of our political actions would have a much smaller practical effect, and the Serbs in Bosnia would have found themselves in a very difficult situation (...) We have opened the process of democratic transformation into a three-in-one community, a republic of three peoples or three republics. Each of these communities establishes sovereignty for itself, and that sovereignty does not extend to another national community (*Politika* 12 January 1992).

The celebration of RS Day on January 9 is part of a larger discussion dating back to 2004 and pertaining to the equal representation and inclusivity of all three constitutive peoples in BiH with respect to the BIH Constitution (i.e., in relation to the 'Law on the Family Patron-Saints' Days and Church Holidays of RS'. In 2007, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted the Act on the Holiday of Republika Srpska and recognised January 9 as the Day of Republika Srpska. In 2013, then-Bosniak member of BiH's tripartite presidency, Bakir Izetbegović, submitted an appeal (case U–3/13) to the BiH Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of Article 3 (b) of the 'Law on Holidays of Republika Srpska' according to which the Day of Republika Srpska is an official holiday in RS.

In April 2015, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted a 'Declaration about the RS Law on Holidays', stating that it would disregard the pending decision of the BiH Constitutional Court if it was not in line with the publicly expressed RS view. The Declaration further questioned the legitimacy and pres-

5 Radovan Karadžić was the first President of Republika Srpska and was convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, March 2016) for war crimes during the Bosnian War, including genocide.

ence of foreign judges at the BiH Constitutional Court. Moreover, it asked the BiH Parliamentary Assembly to Adopt a Law on the BiH Constitutional Court. In addition, the RS Prime Minister and the RS National Assembly Speaker argued that if the BIH Constitutional Court annulled the RS Law on Holidays, it would not be a legal but rather political decision. Therefore, the decision would not be implemented in RS (OHR Special Report 2016). The BiH Constitutional Court assessed the constitutionality of the Article in question and consulted with the Venice Commission whether celebrating the Day of RS on January 9 would cause discrimination of Bosniaks, Croats and Others residing in RS. On 26 November 2015, the Court ruled by majority vote (5–3) that:

> the Article 3 (b) of the Law on Holidays of the Republika Srpska (*Službeni glasnik Republike Srpske* No.43/07) is not in conformity with Article I/2 of the Constitution of BiH and the Article II/4 of the Constitution of BiH in conjunction with Article 1 (1) and Article 2 (a) and (c) of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and Article 1 of Protocol No.12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom (*Službeni glasnik BiH* No.77/16 2016).

The ruling of the BiH Constitutional Court did not dispute the right of RS to celebrate the Day of Republika Srpska; rather, it objected to the specific date of January 9, because it was not an acceptable date to all ethnic groups in RS. The RS National Assembly was given six months (until 25 June 2016) to modify Article 3(b) of the Law on Holidays of Republika Srpska to fit with the Constitution of BiH and inform the Court about the measures taken to implement the decision of the Court (*Službeni glasnik BiH* No.77/16 2016). These modifications were meant to reflect the identity, culture and traditions of all three constitutive people of BiH.[6]

The RS National Assembly submitted an appeal, which was denied on 17 September 2016 (Bassuener – Mujanovic 2017). Ignoring the ruling, the RS Day Referendum took place in September 2016. Valentin Inzko, the then-High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated that by carrying out the proposed referendum, RS authorities would later claim precedent had been set and would in the future hold additional referenda on the status of Republika Srpska within BiH (OHR Special Report 2016). That is, since what is now RS was proclaimed on 9 January 1992 (before BiH declared independence from Yugoslavia), they have the right to have a referendum on outright independence from BiH. This view was reiterated by Inzko in the 18 May 2017 issue of *Glas Srpske*, where he '…stressed that the entities do not have the right to secede' (*Glas Srpske*, p. 2).

6 Bosniaks (Sunni Muslim), Croats (Roman Catholic) and Serbs (Serbian Orthodox).

Despite the BiH Constitutional Court's ruling, Republika Srpska continued to celebrate its national day on January 9. On 25 September 2016, RS held a referendum on the view of its citizens towards the Day of Republika Srpska. The referendum asked its citizens: 'Do you support that January 9 be observed and celebrated as the Day of Republika Srpska?' In the referendum, 680,116 citizens voted out of 1,219,399 citizens who had the right to vote. The turnout of 55.57 % was enough to declare the referendum valid according to the RS Law on Referendum and Citizens' Initiative, which states that over 50 % of registered citizens must turn out to vote. The result of the referendum was that 99.81 % (or 677,721 registered voters) voted 'yes' and only 1,291 voted 'no' (Kulaga 2016: 4).

Republika Srpska argued that the referendum was a democratic tool. At the same time, the FBiH and the international community questioned the referendum's true purpose – whether it was to ensure that this date was an official RS holiday or if it was a matter of RS identity, potentially separate from BiH in the future. The Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jonathan Moore, stated the referendum was unnecessary as it could not change the original ruling of the BiH Constitutional Court and 'RS politicians certainly know what the people think... [and the referendum] is a "waste of money and time' (Domazet 2016: 5). The total cost of the conduct of the referendum was 1.42 million Bosnian Marks (or approx.726,034.00 Euros).

After the referendum, the RS National Assembly adopted a 'Law on the Day of Republika Srpska', which was created 'on the basis of confirmed will of the citizens of RS' (Službeni glasnik Republike Srpske: No.113/16) due to the referendum results. According to this law, January 9 would be considered a secular holiday without any religious affiliation. The decision of the BiH Constitutional Court remains unchanged but the Day of Republika Srpska continues to be observed and celebrated within RS.

Data and Methodology

After 1995, there exist three main broadsheet newspapers that cater to the three constituent peoples in BiH: *Dnevni avaz* (Bosniak), *Dnevni list* (Croat) and *Glas Srpske* (Serb). The Bosnian-Serb newspaper *Glas Srpske* is written in the Serbian language using the Cyrillic alphabet; it is published in Banja Luka, the administrative capitol of Republika Srpska. As Loveless (2008: 166), states, individuals '...can become dependent on a particular medium for their information and that people dependent on different media tend to have different pictures of the world'. *Glas Srpske* was chosen because the authors are interested in the presentation and portrayal of events from the Bosnian-Serb perspective. Specifically, we are interested in the presentation and portrayal of the 'Day of Republika Srpska' and the 'RS Day Referendum' since both events had taken place in RS. Thus, it will reveal what and how information

on the RS Day and RS Day Referendum was conveyed to its readers, who are concentrated in RS.

We use the five/frame model originally developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)[7], which has also been used by other scholars in exploring broadsheet newspapers in countries such as Chile (e.g., Gronemeyer – Porath 2017), France, the Netherlands (e.g., Dirikx – Gelders 2010) and the United States (e.g., An and Gower 2009). The five frames of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) are: attribution of responsibility, human interest, conflict, morality and economic consequences. Attribution of responsibility illustrates an issue or a problem by attributing responsibility for its cause or solution to either an individual, group or the government. The Human Interest frame adds 'a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem' (Semetko – Valkenburg 2000: 95). The Conflict frame stresses the difference between conflicting parties (i.e., individuals, groups, institutions) to capture audience attention. The Economic Consequences frame portrays how an issue or event will economically affect individuals, groups, institutions, regions or even a country. Lastly, the Morality frame places the issue, event or problem in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions (Semetko – Valkenburg 2000). We therefore present two hypotheses:

H1: 'Conflict' and 'Attribution of Responsibility' will be the most prevalent frames in *Glas Srpske*.

H2: The referendum will be framed as a democratic right of all RS citizens.

The dataset consists of 1,516 newspaper issues and an analysis of 907 identified articles published during the five-year period, from 31 December 2015 to 30 December 2020.[8] This time frame allowed for baseline measurement of news reporting preceding and following the celebration of RS Day and the 2016 RS Day

7 The frames were slightly modified to fit the BiH context and topic. Each issue was reviewed and the specific search terms included: RS Day, Referendum and January 9. Each article was read at least three times (i.e., the first time to get a general idea about the article, the second time to carefully code it and the third time, the article was re-read to determine its overall tone). While Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) model consisted of 20 questions, this research consisted of 24 questions, which measure the frequency of five frames in stories related to the RS Day and RS Day referendum. The additional questions were: 'Does the story suggest that a non-Serb ethnic individual or a non-Serb ethnic/other groups of people in society is/are responsible for the issue' (attribution of responsibility frame); 'Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?' (human interest frame); 'Does the story reflect disagreement between individuals/ethnic groups/entities?' (conflict frame); 'Does the story contain any moral message' (morality frame); and 'Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?' (economic consequences frame). The possible answer for each question was either 'yes' or 'no' and were coded as: yes (1) and no (0).

8 During the 5-year period, *Glas Srpske* published 1,527 issues; some issues covering multiple days. In total, the analysis included 99.3 % of published newspaper issues.

Referendum. The dataset covers all available newspaper issues obtained through a purchased subscription of *Glas Srpske*. All issues had the same format; they were the print issues in PDF format. For each available issue, all articles mentioning the RS Day and RS referendum were entirely coded, meaning if an article from the front page continued in an inside page, the latent text was coded as well.

We use SPSS Statistics v.26 to conduct our statistical analyses. In order to confirm that our data is indeed appropriate to conduct a factor analysis, we first run a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy Test (KMO Test), which has a range of 0–1. The data has a KMO value of 0.829, which Kaiser (1974: 35) deems 'meritorious'. We also test for Cronbach's α, which is an internal consistency measurement (α = 0.753). Our preliminary tests confirm that a factor analysis is indeed appropriate for the data. With this 'meritorious' score, a principal component analysis was conducted with a coefficient cut-off of 0.50 on a rotated component matrix (see: Table 1), thus allowing us to learn more about the underlying structure of the data (Anderson 1963: 137). Using a principal component analysis and having an eigenvalue of one or higher, we find that eight components (factors) load. Table 1 represents the rotated component matrix, which estimates the correlations between each of the variables and the estimated components. It helps us understand what the components represent (this is explained in the Results section). These eight factors account for a cumulative 54.103% of the variance in the variables. Four subscale items[9] did not surpass the coefficient cut-off of 0.50; no items double-loaded in this analysis.

Table 1: Rotated Component Matrix

Items (frames listed in parentheses)	Factors							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Does the story suggest that some level of RS gov't has the ability to alleviate the problem? (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.751							
Does the story suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue? (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.690							
Does the story refer to two sides or to more than two sides of the problem or issue? (Conflict Frame)	.672							
Does the story suggest that some level of the RS government is responsible for the issue/problem? (NOTE - by responsible it is meant to be responsible for either causing or solving the issue) (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.657							

9 (1) Does the story suggest that a non-Serb ethnic individual or a non-Serb ethnic/other group of people in society is responsible for the issue-problem? (Attribution of Responsibility); (2) Does the story suggest the problem requires urgent action? (Attribution of Responsibility); (3) Does the story contain any moral message? (Morality); and (4) Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action? (Economic Consequences).

Does the story suggest that some level of F-BiH government has the ability to alleviate the problem? (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.637							
Does the story suggest that some level of the F-BIH government is responsible for the issue/ problem? (NOTE - by responsible it is meant to be responsible for either causing it or solving the issue) (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.610							
Does the story suggest that the decision of Constitutional Court is responsible for the the issue? (Attribution of Responsibility Frame)	.591							
Does one party-individual-group-country reproach another? (Conflict Frame)		.754						
Does the story reflect disagreement between Bosnian-Serbs' political individuals/parties? (Conflict Frame)		.573						
Does the story reflect disagreement between individuals-ethnic groups-entities? (Conflict Frame)		.518						
Does the story provide a human example or "human face" on the issue? (Human Interest Frame)			.717					
Does the story employ adjectives or personal vignettes that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion? (Human Interest Frame)			.619					
Does the story go into the private or personal lives of the actors? (Human Interest Frame)			.563					
Does the story make reference to morality, God, religion and other religious tenets? (Morality Frame)				.663				
Does the story refer to winners and losers? (Conflict Frame)				.656				
Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave according to democratic principles/rights/tools or mentions democracy in general? (Morality Frame)					.620			
Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future? (Economic Consequences Frame)						.797		
Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved? (Economic Consequences Frame)							.759	
Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem? (Human Interest Frame)							.521	
Does the story contain visual information that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy or compassion? (Human Interest Frame)								.811

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. All loadings less than 0.50 are suppressed.
Rotation converged in 12 iterations.

Table 2: Level of Use of Frames in *Glas Srpske*, per Year

		Attribution of Responsibility	Conflict	Human Interest	Morality	Economic Consequences
2016[10]	M:	0.31	0.28	0.06	0.15	0.03
	SD:	0.463	0.451	0.237	0.362	0.158
2017	M:	0.15	0.22	0.06	0.15	0.01
	SD:	0.356	0.412	0.236	0.360	0.098
2018	M:	0.10	0.15	0.09	0.11	0.05
	SD:	0.294	0.355	0.280	0.310	0.225
2019	M:	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.09	0.02
	SD:	0.336	0.352	0.307	0.294	0.146
2020	M:	0.09	0.16	0.16	0.11	0.04
	SD:	0.287	0.367	0.367	0.312	0.198
Study Period, 31. 12. 2015 – 30. 12. 2020	M:	0.21	0.23	0.08	0.14	0.03
	SD:	0.406	0.418	0.266	0.344	0.159

(M=mean score; SD=standard deviation)

Results

The framing items that comprise the first and second principal components confirm our hypotheses due to them consisting of either 'Attribution of Responsibility' or 'Conflict' subscale items, although one 'Conflict' subscale item loads on the fourth factor with a 'Morality' subscale item. The eight factors from Table 1 present a potential issue since several 'Human Interest' and 'Economic Consequences' subscale items load on independent factors, thus extending from the baseline five of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) to our present eight. All eight factors (Table 1) have strong loadings. However, three of our eight factors consist of single subscale items from either the Human Interest, Morality or Economic Consequences frames. We therefore keep the original five frames 'as is' in our frame analyses, of course excluding the four subscale items that did not load in the matrix (see footnote 9 for the non-loading items).

10 Includes 31 December 2015 issue.

The most common frame within *Glas Srpske* that mentioned our key words for the period 31 December 2015 through 30 December 2020 was the 'Conflict' frame (mean: 0.23); the second most common frame was 'Attribution of Responsibility' (0.21); third was 'Morality' (0.14); fourth was 'Human Interest' (0.08) and fifth was 'Economic Consequences' (0.03). When broken down by year, the 'Conflict' frame is still the most prevalent, with the exception of 2016, where 'Attribution of Responsibility' is more prevalent. Hypothesis 1, which states: '"Conflict" and "Attribution of Responsibility" will be the most prevalent frames in *Glas Srpske*' may be accepted. Not only did the research show that the usage of these two frames in *Glas Srpske* stressed the differences of opinions and views regarding these two events, but it also fits with other research and literature, which show that 'Conflict' and 'Attribution of Responsibilities' are commonly used in the news (e.g., Semetko – Valkenburg 2000: 95), but not always simultaneously as it was in our case. See Table 2 for full breakdown by year.

However, in the context of BiH and its complex interethnic relations, these two frames appear to describe its contentious politics. In terms of 'Attribution of Responsibility', they are presented differently between Republika Srpska and Federation of BiH. In particular, the news portrayed RS as the one responsible for solving the problem while the Federation of BiH is portrayed as causing the problem, which means that the FBiH could alleviate the problem as well (the high mean score for 'Attribution of Responsibility' in 2016 and subsequent drop may reflect pre/post referendum foci). Although the Federation of BiH is framed in such a way, the FBiH is typically used as a stand-in for the Bosniaks – that is, the FBiH as a legal political entity is not wholly to blame, but rather Bosniaks as an ethnic group are to blame. An example of this may be seen via the title and subsequent article published in *Glas Srpske* on 31 December 2016. The article title mentions the Federation of BiH, whereas the article itself (first sentence provided below) solely blames Bosniaks.

> Title:
> Provokacije iz FBiH povodom Dana Republike
> ['Provocation from FBiH Regarding the Day of the Republic']
>
> 'Bosniak associations again sent provocative messages to Banja Luka stating that the verdicts handed down at The Hague Tribunal and the Court of BiH indicate that the RS was institutionally and systematically behind the genocide. The letter, signed by 29 Bosniak associations, arrived on Friday at the address of the Mayor of Banja Luka, Igor Radojičić, and a member of the City Assembly.'

When it comes to conflict, the research further confirmed that individuals and groups reproached each other reflecting disagreements between political figures, political parties and ethnic groups. It is important to state that one of the additional questions added to Semetko and Valkenburg's model was 'Does the story reflect disagreement between Bosnian-Serb political individuals/political parties?' The reason for adding this question was that we wanted to see whether *Glas Srpske* illustrated a united front between Bosnian-Serbs and political parties regarding the Day of Republika Srpska and the RS Day Referendum. The findings show that there have been disagreements with Bosnian-Serb political parties. While the major Bosnian-Serb political parties (i.e., the Serbian Democratic Party, SDS; and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats, SNSD) supported these two events, they disagreed regarding the date on which date the referendum should take the place. The SDS advocated for the referendum to take place after the election, questioning whether the referendum was used as an election campaign by the SNSD since the referendum was scheduled seven days prior to the 2016 BiH elections, held on 2 October 2016.

Previous studies in the United States (e.g., Neuman et al. 1992; Graber 1993) identified that the economic consequences frame is one of the more common frames in the news, as it explains the effect specific events or issues have financially on an individual, group, country, etc. However, our research revealed that this was the least common frame, meaning that the news did not stress the financial cost or burden that these two events would potentially have on RS. Interestingly, the cost associated with holding the referendum was only mentioned twice (1.42 million Bosnian Marks) while the cost for one of the Day of Republika Srpska was barely mentioned and was reported to be 498,280.00 Bosnian Marks in 2018 (*Glas Srpske* 28 May 2018). The majority of the articles related to the 'Economic Consequences' frame discussed the cost related to building and infrastructure projects, which would be named 'January 9' or an initiative started by Milorad Dodik asking local communities to name one street or a town square 'January 9'. In general, *Glas Srpske* reflects no particular interest in economic consequences, loss or profit brought about with these two events. This shows that the emphasis is on discursively maximising emotional salience to the date or mobilisation of affect as opposed to deliberative calculations. Simply put, national pride – in this instance, Serb national pride tied to Republika Srpska via January 9 – does not have a price tag (and nor should it). This emotional attachment to January 9 is therefore tied to Serb identity within RS. Outside of RS, the referendum was described by the Head of the OSCE Mission to BiH, Jonathan Moore, as a waste of money, a distraction from real problems and used to boost the popularity of certain Bosnian-Serb politicians ahead of local elections (the referendum was held seven days prior to the 2016 elections) (Domazet 2016: 5). The views of the international community in BiH tend to have the opposite affect and are used by Bosnian-Serb politicians in RS

to show how they are 'under siege' by outside forces and must resist. This therefore increases an emotional attachment to the RS and celebrating January 9.

We now turn to our second hypothesis, which states: 'The referendum will be framed as a democratic right of all RS citizens.' This is measured via the following 'Morality' subscale item: 'Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave according to democratic principles/rights/tools or mentions democracy in general?' This subscale item has a coefficient of 0.620, per our principle component analysis (Table 1). The overall mean score is 0.11, with the highest mean score in 2016 (0.17) and the lowest in 2019 (0.03); see Table 3 for the full results. On the surface, this seems logical given that the referendum was held on 25 September 2016 and news coverage would taper off in later years. However, Hypothesis 2 must be rejected on the basis of such low yearly scores. This finding is also in line with that of Dekavalla (2016), in which she found that Scottish newspapers did not frame the 2014 independence referendum as a democratic right (the right of self-determination). In our case, the legality of the extra-legal referendum as a 'democratic right" is not at the heart of the matter within the pages of *Glas Srpske*; rather, the mobilisation of affect is the heart of discursive structure. The statistical results of this content analysis shows the discursive focus of *Glas Srpske* is 'who is to blame' (the moral 'Us' vs. the profane 'Other') rather than specific foci on 'democratic rights' of the (Bosnian-Serb) citizenry in Republika Srpska. Although this is the case, the record shows 55.57% of registered voters in RS turned out to vote, with 99.81 voting in favour of the January 9 holiday (*Glas Srpske* 2016).

Table 3: Framing of Democratic Rights in *Glas Srpske*, per Year. Referendum as a Democratic Right of RS Citizens

year	mean score	standard deviation
2016[11]	0.17	0,380
2017	0.08	0,276
2018	0,06	0,235
2019	0,03	0,159
2020	0,05	0,159
Study period 31. 12. 2015 – 30. 12. 2020	0,11	0,315

The strength of this study is that it attempts to analyse in depth the contentious issues as they are portrayed through the main Bosnian-Serb newspaper. A limitation of this study is that the analysis explores one of the three main broadsheet newspapers in BiH. The research would contribute to the political science sub-

11 Includes 31 December 2015 issue.

field of political communication as the research on framing and agenda setting of news coverage in BiH regarding national holidays and referendums is to our knowledge, non-existent. It also shows the lack of focus on 'democratic rights' and more on aspects of 'who to blame'.

Concluding remarks

The leaked 'non-paper' of April 2021, entitled 'Western Balkans – A Way Forward' was allegedly written by Slovene Prime Minister Janez Janša (Slovenian Democratic Party). It was leaked by the Slovene news portal *necenzurirano.si* on 15 April 2021 (Cirman – Vuković 2021) as our research project came to an end. The authenticity of this 'non-paper' has not been acknowledged, but nevertheless caused a firestorm across the wider Western Balkan region due to its proposal of partition along ethnic lines to solve the various 'national questions' of the former Yugoslavia, such as joining a larger part of Republika Srpska with Serbia, either uniting Bosnian-Croat areas with Croatia or providing those areas special status within BiH, and uniting Kosovo with Albania.[12] This thus breaks with not only the Dayton Peace Accords, but also the international concept of *Uti possidetis, ita possidetis* (e.g., Ramet 2002: 210). Section 2.d of the non-paper states that 'Bosniaks will thus gain an independently functioning state and assume full responsibility for it', however; this is simply a re-hashing of the failed 1993 Vance-Owen Peace Plan, which sparked conflict between Bosniaks and Bosnian-Croats in Herzegovina. After the non-paper 'Western Balkans – A Way Forward' became available, Komšić claimed as much, stating:

> They offer an option that was offered to us even before the war started, and it was offered again during the war; basically the option of a small Bosniak state – or, as they say, 'Muslim.' This paper, this kind of politics, everything that gives birth to those ideas prevails in certain European countries, and deep down, it is fuelled by anti-Islamism and anti-Semitism… (cited in Dragojlović 2021).

12 This was only the most recent 'non-paper' that caused controversy in the region. Before the leak, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, Gordan Grlic Radman, submitted a non-paper about BiH to EU-members on March 22, 2021 (RTL, April 19, 2021). The non-paper focused on key reforms, including the reform of the electoral law. Željko Komšić, the Croat member of BiH's tripartite presidency, responded through his own non-paper, in which he warned about direct influences and interference of neighbouring countries (i.e., Croatia and Serbia) as well as Russia, and 'systematic destruction of the state institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and obstruction of their functioning through the officials appointed by HDZ and SNSD, through the House of Peoples and the Council of Ministers' (Klix, April 2, 2021). Moreover, Komšić also pointed out how the EU Mission in BiH had shown 'the level of servitude towards the demands coming from SNSD (Dodik) and HDZ BiH (Čović)' by trying to accommodate their demands, which are 'not in line with the strengthening of the state institutions or making decisions for the benefit of all citizens of BiH' (Klix, April 2, 2016).

The author(s) of these type of non-papers need to understand that they promote ethno-religious nationalism and ethnic exclusivism, and are contrary to BiH's best interest in keeping the post-Dayton peace. To some extent, the non-paper resembles Karadžić's statement regarding the creation of the precursor of Republika Srpska, the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As may be seen from our analysis of *Glas Srpske*, the 'Conflict' frame is already prevalent, which shows that there is a lack of consensus and cooperation among certain political elites representing the constituent peoples of BiH. The focus needs to be on building these relationships for the best interest of BiH, not giving an opportunity to those already wanting to secede taking a piece of BiH with them. The assumption that everyone should be satisfied by having their own ethnically homogeneous state at the expense of the historically multi-ethnic BiH can lead to its downfall and result in further conflicts. It is crucial that the international community – especially the United States and European Union – not tolerate ethno-national secessionist rhetoric, whose end goal is the disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus, as mentioned previously, violates the Dayton Peace Accords and *Uti possidetis, ita possidetis*. BiH cannot become another 'lessons learned' (again) for the international community. Further analysis of this 'non-paper' is beyond the scope of this present article, but deserved to be commented on.

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