UNDERSTANDING DIVISIVE NARRATIVES

Media analysis
Serbia & Kosovo

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Contents

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INTRODUCTION

This media analysis is conducted in order to understand how divisive narratives are generated and disseminated in mainstream media in Serbia and Kosovo. The aim of the analysis is to identify dominant public narrative in Serbia and Kosovo within selected media content, considering the process of othering, which is considered as a process of mutual representation of Kosovo and Serbia in media coverage in both states.

The process of othering is never completed and it is dominantly determined by media representation of groups and individuals. It is a hierarchical relationship in which in-group (*We*) and out-group (*Other*) is understood in terms of power relations. In one (media) context, *We* can be considered as powerful subject while *Other* is inferior, but in different (media) contexts the positions can be changed[1]. In addition, these two identities can take a certain position related to the third subject – *Important Other* which is the definer of power relation between *We* and *Other*. In terms of a relationship between entities such as states, nations, ethnic groups, two entities (Serbia and Kosovo) construct mutual power relation, but also strengthen their own positions by introducing *Important Other* (some international subject: USA, Russia, China, etc.).

Media are actively participating in the othering process by (re)constructing these entities and their relations in narratives. If they are neutral in reporting, media narratives are maintaining established relations between entities, but they can also be collaborative towards certain relations and strengthen it or challenge it through problematizing it. Considering a specific role, **media create narratives from cohesive to divisive**. The first is the basis for social and political cohesion and the second, deepens the gap between them. **The most explicit othering narrative is hate speech**, which is likely to be avoided in contemporary media due to regulations and trust. Nevertheless, media use different strategies to successfully **imply othering in narratives** and place divisive messages in content structure.

At first, othering strategies are based on the selection and interpretation of topics and their representation and, more importantly, their – framing. Selection of topics, media actors' active or passive role in the text and type of their representation is setting the media agenda, and consequently – overall understanding of public relevant issues. Framing essentially involves selection and salience. It is a selection of some aspects of reality, which makes them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular

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[1] Franklin, B. et al. (2005) *Key Concepts in Journalism Studies*, Sage Publications

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definition, causal interpretation and moral evaluation[2], which means that one entity is excluded from the narrative in favor of the other. In the case of Serbia-Kosovo othering process, the frame defines the package of narrative elements in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations of the *Other* entity and to discourage different ones. Kosovo and Serbia's gap is framed in 1. Ethnic frame (origins/ethnic and founding myth of two entities: Serbian vs. Albanian); 2. Nation/state frame (Serbia integrity vs. Kosovo independence); 3. International supporter frame (US vs. Russia); 4. Conflict frame (Other as aggressor vs. self-victimization) 5. Legitimization frame (heroic vs. traitor).

Frames are grounded in **sources** and strengthened by the use of **stereotypes**. Sources selection provides certain material (facts, statements,…) which is considered as an argument for framing. Perpetuating and upgrading stereotypes is a strategy for the long-term maintenance of constructed frames. Stereotypes indicate thinking in terms of categories and group membership, exclude rational consideration and in general - stereotypes are adopted with no rational (re)consideration, as – truth.

Secondly, the intensity of othering in text is built on a level of narrative polarization between two entities and level of narrative emotionality. In terms of polarization[3], media narrative highlights differences, similarities are omitted and the narrative does not provide a basis for mutual understanding and gap reduction. Moreover, introducing emotions which are not immanent to the news media narrative, maintains and strengthens in-between the gap and mobilizes expected (public) emotions. Emotions and polarization can be inscribed in the narrative through the **form of the text**: information texts (news) are supposed to be neutral and based on facts, but the selection of news sources can polarize narrative (single-minded texts). Analytical text (articles) opens space for polarization and mobilization of emotions in its interpretation. The opinion contains author attitudes, which may polarize entities explicitly. Human interest stories provoke polarization based on the human perspective and these texts have a huge capacity to mobilize people's emotions on an individual level. Media narrative in the othering process is also constructed around **main topics and actors**. Actors, their selection, presentation and their role in the narrative are important ground for polarization. Also, their treatment, tone of the text, as well as visual presentation construct level of

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[2] Frames define problems - determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits; diagnose causes - identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments - evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies - offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. (Entman, R. M. (1993) Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm, Northwestern University)

[3] Ninković Slavnić, D. (2011) "Medijska reprezentacija grupnih identiteta", u CM, FPN Beograd

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emotionality in the narrative. Perceived as key figures of the narrative, actors' presentation plays a key role in frame construction. The level of polarization depends, finally, on topics that media select to report on, interpret, analyze, or present as a story. In terms of cohesion and division, it is of great importance if media choose to present topics from *We* or *Other* ground or perspective, as well as the focus of the *Other* in that specific narrative. The *Other* in the primary focus, in a broader context, or just mentioned within selected topics creates specific thematic context, role and importance of the *Other* in it.

Method

The analysis of the Serbian and Kosovo media was conducted in the period from February 1 to 29, 2020. The sample consisted of texts obtained from the media outlets on the national level in Serbia and Kosovo. The local media were not taken into account, because they did not provide sufficiently specific insight into the relationship between the Kosovo and Serbia. The unit of the analysis was text with identified keywords to Kosovo and Albanian identities for Serbian media and Serbia related words for Kosovo media.

The sample of Albanian media was consisted of 251 texts from 5 media: 44 texts from the portal Botasot.info, 100 texts from the Gazetaexpress.com, 31 from the Indeksonline.net, 59 from the Koha.net and 17 from the Rtklive.com.

Serbian media sample consisted of 425 texts from 5 media: 68 texts from the daily Informer, 71 texts from the Kurir.rs portal, 111 texts from the daily Politika, 70 texts from the Srbijadanas.rs portal and 105 texts from the daily Večernje novosti.

For this analysis combination of qualitative and quantitative was used: a) content analysis, "information-gathering technique (that) enables us to illuminate patterns in communication content reliably and validly. And only through the reliable and valid illumination of such patterns can we hope to illuminate content causes or predict content effects"[4]; and b) narrative analysis "as a genre of analytic frames whereby researchers interpret stories that are told within the context of research and/or are shared in everyday life[5]".

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[4] Riffe, D; Lacy, S; Fico, F. (2014) Analyzing Media Messages, Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research, Routledge.

[5] Parcell, E & Baker, B.M.A. (2017) "Narrative Analysis" in The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods, Sage Publication

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KEY FINDINGS - KOSOVO

Framing

Packages of narrative elements construct frames, which play an important role in the othering process. The frames observed in Kosovo media are based on five different concepts built on a) ethnic belonging; b) nation/state; c) direction of international support; d) elements of the previous conflict; e) heroism. Kosovo independence frame is the most present in the narratives - 26% or 66 of 251 analyzed texts (vs. about 2% Serbian integrity frame), followed by 18% - 45 texts that contain US support towards the Kosovo frame (vs. about 2% Russia support towards Serbia). Traitor frame is observed in 14% texts (vs. heroic 7%), self-victimization frame is present almost equally as the aggressor (13%) and finally, Albanian ethnic frame has been used in 6% narratives (vs. 2% Serbian)[6].

Frames and stereotypes

Nation/state frame is observed in 66 texts, within which 53% contain stereotypes. Media content is mainly dedicated to the building of Kosovo sovereignty and is, at some point, centered on specific events such as the Independent day, but also was recalled when reporting on current political issues such as the abolition of the taxes on Serbian goods, regional relations, or activities of Serbian authorities[7]. Serbian integrity frame was presumed as an opposite frame, but it was observed in one text only, as an object of criticism.

Frames are deeply rooted in those stereotypes, which provide ground for their perpetuation and upgrade. Most stereotypes are embedded in the aggressor frame - 94% texts that contain aggressor frame perpetuate or upgrade stereotypes which are based on the idea that Serbs are (war) criminals and occupiers. Those texts are grounded in carefully selected information that leads to the conclusion that Serbian "state ideology is rooted in fascism". This has been achieved also by recalling different tragic events from the past, which illustrate "state terror". The self-victimization frame emphasizes the martyrdom of civilians and members of the Kosovo liberation army (KLA). Often written in emotional or very inflammatory language, this frame provokes strong reactions of injustice. Almost 83% of texts framed in this way contain stereotypes, which perpetuate and upgrade the image of Kosovo as a victim of Serbia.[8]

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[6] Each text could contain more than one frame.
[7] The Office for Kosovo and Metohija is labeled as "të ashtuquajturës Zyre Serbe për Kosovën" (so-called Office): https://www.botasot.info/aktuale-lajme/1235583/nenshkruhet-marreveshja-mes-kosoves-dhe-serbise-per-autostraden-dhe-hekurudhen/, approached on June 5, 2020.
[8] https://www.koha.net/kulture/209840/tregimi-i-patreguar-per-kosoven/, approached on June 2, 2020.

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Albanian ethnic frame is also mainly based on stereotypes (93% analyzed ethnic framed texts), constructed through reinterpretation of the history which recalls different identities, among the other, the Middle Age identity of Albanians[9]: Arbër[10] ethnic group. This notion was observed in Koha Ditore online, which titles the whole section of news (Lajme) as Arbër. This section contains news about the most important/relevant topics considering Kosovo and all neighboring territories where Albanians live[11]. On the other hand, the section named Kosovo treats less relevant topics, service and locally relevant information within the Republic of Kosovo. It is interesting to mention that Koha Ditore print issue contains the Arbër section only. In the Kosovo media, there are only a few reports which are framed around Serbian ethnicity, mainly as the object of criticism.

Both legitimization frames - are constructed on heroic or traitor treatment towards key figures within Kosovo's public space. Heroic frame recalls heroic battles (war and political) for the independence of Kosovo and perpetuates stereotypes in the media narrative with the aim to glorify the whole process of „liberation Albanian land from Serbian occupation"[12] (76% texts that contain heroic frame). The confrontation against „Serbian aggressor" legitimizes social actors, which are celebrated for heroic past. Putting in any kind of relationship with Serbia recalls stereotypes that lead to the delegitimization of social actors, who are, in that case, represented as traitors (64% framed texts). The other contexts of delegitimization are related to challenging heroic narratives, especially those that are related to KLA[13].

Remaining frames introduce the third subject in this picture – *The Important Other*, which is considered as source of power. In the case of Kosovo, the media recognize the United States of America as *The Important Other*. On the other hand, the third international subject related to Serbia is Russia. Topic related to Russia is less likely to be framed in selected narratives, but observed texts are strongly stereotyped. Kosovo media presume that the US

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[9] https://www.rtklive.com/sq/news-single.php?ID=415080, approached on June 2, 2020.
[10] According to Fjalor i gjuhës shqipe 2006 :47. Botues: ASHASH:
a). Arbër,ri; m. sh. -ër, -ërit, historically – collective noun for Albanians in the Middle Age; Arbresh – leaders of Arberie
b) As a dialect language - Albanian (in order to be differ from the foreigner)
c) As a dialect language – inhabitant of Laberia and Valona
d) Historically, poetically - related to the Albanians of the Middle Ages; Albanian land.
Schwandner-Sievers, S. and Fischer, B.J. (2002) *Albanian Identites- Myth and History*, Indiana University Press
[11] https://www.koha.net/arberi/207745/shqiptaret-e-medvegjes-te-shqetesuar-me-fshirjen-nga-regjistrat-civile-ne-serbi/, visited on June 2, 2020.
[12] See reference 14.
[13] https://indeksonline.net/kollcaku-i-bie-pishman-fshin-postimin-ku-permendte-dosjet-kriminale-te-uck-se/, visited on June 2, 2020.

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strongly supports Kosovo in achieving its national goals, in a similar fashion as Russia toward Serbia and both relations are represented within a set of stereotypes.

Table 1 – Presence of stereotypes in each observed frame

Frame/Stereotype	without stereotypes	perpetuates stereotypes	problematizes stereotypes	upgrades stereotypes	total
Kosovo independence	31	25	3	7	66
international supporter - US	27	11	1	6	45
legitimization frame - traitor	13	17	0	6	36
self-victimization	6	14	1	14	35
aggressor	2	21	0	10	33
legitimization frame - heroic	4	9	0	4	17
ethnic Albanian frame	1	5	2	7	15
international supporter - Russia	1	3	0	2	6
ethnic Serbian frame	0	2	2	0	4
Serbia integrity	1	0	0	0	1
without frame	65	4	0	0	69
total	**151**	**111**	**9**	**56**	**327**

Frames and sources

The selection of sources provides ground for specific framing. It could be observed that Kosovo social actors are key sources for texts framed in self-victimization and aggressor context. Total of 55 Kosovo social actors were named, 47% were present in the texts that are based on the above-mentioned frames (13 texts each). Basically, if media report about events from the past, often related to the 1990 – 1999 period, they emphasize personal or victim perspective. Kosovo official or political sources (155 mentioning) are concentrated around three keyframes: Kosovo independence (23%), traitor (17%), and international supporter frame (15%). Frequency of Kosovo independence frame was slightly increased because of the celebration of Independence Day (February 17), but that frame was also observed in the other texts where official sources were mentioned. On the other hand, the traitor frame was primarily related to Kosovo interior politics, where accusations for collaboration with Serbia were the main argument for the delegitimization of political actors. The process of abolition of taxes caused heated discussion which, among the other topics, provoked that frame. The same topics

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were mainly commented on by Kosovo political actors in the context of international supporters (US).

Serbian sources were underrepresented in analyzed texts, only 19 named official or political and 12 social sources were objects of reporting, but the statement of the Serbian historian, and Socialist Party of Serbia official Predrag Markovic (described as historian *fascist* by analyst and journalist Halil Matoshi[14]), repeated in a few texts only caused heated debate in Kosovo public. His opinion about Albin Kurti, posted by Vetëvendosje (Self-determination) Movement MP, Fatmire Mulhaxha-Kollqaku provoked delegitimization of (then) Prime minister Albin Kurti by different Kosovo political and social actors.

Foreign sources were cited in 55 mentionings, mostly in texts which are placed in the international support frame (US) – 32%.

The other sources observed in analyzed texts were Kosovo and Serbian media (9 and 15 mentionings, respectively), 58 texts were based on personal opinion or did not specify any particular source, and 10 texts contained information originated from an unnamed source.

Balance

Kosovo media did not report in a balanced manner towards topics and actors related to Serbia within the most of analyzed texts (75%). It could be observed that 52% of texts is collaborative, 47% is neutral and only 1% challenges the dominant narrative. If we put it in the perspective of polarization, this picture is completed – strong polarization is mainly present in the collaborative narratives (83%). Only 65 or 25% texts could be perceived as balanced in the terms of representation of Serbia–related topics. Those texts are neutral and written using moderate speech and could be observed as a just approach (**table 2**).

Table 2 – Polarization in the role of media context

Polarization/Dominant narrative perspective	Collaborative	Neutral	Challenging	Total
Moderate narrative	2	65	0	67
Somewhat polarising narrative	33	35	1	69
Strongly polarising narrative	96	18	1	115
Total	**131**	**118**	**2**	**251**

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[14] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/halil-matoshi-dekonstrukton-deklaraten-e-analistit-serb-per-albin-kurtin/, approached on June 2, 2020.

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Each of analyzed media took a different perspective, according to the editorial policy and preferred political affiliation. The most polarizing narratives are present in the Bota Sot – 45% texts are written in the strongly polarizing manner (**table 3**), followed by Gazeta Express (41%), Index Online (35%), Koha Ditore (34%) and RTK live, where we could find the least polarizing texts (23%). On the other hand, Koha Ditore tried to represent topics and actors related to Serbia within the most balanced approach (37% texts). The similar finding is observed in RTK live (35%) and Index Online (32%). Gazeta Express and Bota Sot represented Serbia–related content in a balanced manner only in 21% and 14% texts, respectively.

Table 3 – Polarization in the role of media context: **Bota Sot**

Bota Sot: Polarization/Dominant narrative perspective	**Collaborative**	**Neutral**	**Challenging**	**Total**
Moderate narrative	0	6	0	6
Somewhat polarising narrative	5	8	0	13
Strongly polarising narrative	20	5	1	25
Total	**25**	**19**	**1**	**44**

An important aspect of polarizing narratives is also a level of emotional engagement within the analyzed content. Some emotional language contains 29% narratives, and 14% is based on very emotional or inflammatory language, and detached language is used in 57% texts (**table 4**). When reporting on Serbia or topics related to Serbia, detached language has been used in 65% texts in Gazeta Express, 64% reports in Koha Ditore, 59% texts in RTK Live, followed by 52% in Bota Sot and 29% in Index Online.

Table 4 – Polarization and emotional engagement context

Polarization/ Emotional engagement	**Detached language**	**Some emotional language**	**Very emotional or inflammatory language**	**Total**
Moderate narrative	62	5	0	67
Somewhat polarizing narrative	45	24	0	69
Strongly polarizing narrative	36	44	35	115
Total	**143**	**73**	**35**	**251**

The most prominent polarizing narratives include emotional or inflammatory language, which does the most damage to Kosovo – Serbia relations. That kind of language further divide social distance, emphasize existing differences, provoke misunderstanding and even hatred

among citizens of different ethnicity in Kosovo. Analyzed media content showed that the number of emotional narratives had been increasing from the beginning of the month and culminated on February 17th, when Kosovo celebrates Independence day.

Observed narratives that include inflammatory language can be divided into two broader areas. The first group of topics is dedicated to the remembrance of "martyrs", and is based on stories about victims, "fell" for the Kosovo freedom, or are related to the "liberation" and heroic battle for the independence. Those stories are often situated in the traitor or heroic frames. The best illustration of the above-mentioned pattern of the reporting is a text published in Bota Sot on February 4th 2020 (*Tridhjetë vjet nga martirizimi i Ylfete Humollit - Thirty years since the martyrdom of Ylfete Humolli*), dedicated to the 17-year-old Albanian student killed by Serbian armed forces during protests in 1990. The opinion piece, written by prof. dr. Sadri Rexhepi, exhibits, among the other, extremely inflammatory language when talking about this young girl: "She fell like a double-headed eagle, bloodied by the blood that flowed in her veins for 17 years. Sitting in the blood that will never dry up, in front of the eyes of all the demonstrators with whom she had come out to express all the anger and hatred towards Serbians, anti-Albanian occupiers"[15]. Writing about and remembrance of the 30th anniversary of this tragic event is in the public interest, but the choice of words, in this case, could only provoke new *circulus vitiousus* of violence. Besides this article, 29 different analyzed texts contain word *dëshmor* (martyr)[16], which speaks for itself about the message of this media content.

The other approach consisted of an emotional narrative, is related to the strengthening national cohesion and is represented mainly through independence and heroic frame. Those texts speak about *betimin e UÇK-së për çlirimin e trojeve etnike shqiptare* (the oath of OVK that it will liberate ethnic Albanian lands[17]), through *rrugë lirisë së Kosovës* (way to the freedom of Kosovo[18]), because of *kauza e shtetit sovran kosovar kapërcen kufijt e ideologjive partiake në kontekstin shqiptar dhe rajonal* (cause of sovereign Kosovo state exceeds ideology or political parties in Albanian and regional context[19]). The language used for this purpose brings

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[15] "E ulur në gjakun qe kurrë nuk do të thahet .Ra para syve të të gjithë demonstruesve me të cilët kishte dal në demonstrate për të shprehur tërë mllefin dhe urrejtjen ndaj pushtuesit srbosllav e antishqiptar". Source: https://www.botasot.info/opinione/1229675/tridhjete-vjet-nga-martirizimi-i-ylfete-humollit/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[16] Word *dëshmor* in the form of noun, adverb or verb was repeated in 50 occasions in 251 text.

[17] https://www.koha.net/veshtrime/209833/uck-plus-ldk-e-arriten-clirimin-pdk-plus-ldk-pavaresine-lvv-plus-ldk-njohjen-nderkombetare/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[18] https://www.koha.net/veshtrime/209833/uck-plus-ldk-e-arriten-clirimin-pdk-plus-ldk-pavaresine-lvv-plus-ldk-njohjen-nderkombetare/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[19] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kryeministri-kurti-racional-opozita-e-pabesueshme/, approached on June 2, 2020.

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out feelings of ethnic pride and celebrates sovereignty, but could increase distance towards the Serbian community in Kosovo, as it is openly non-inclusive when it comes to this community.

Both approaches observe Serbia by aggressor frame, which is put to the words through emotional statements that point to Serbian state terror that took place in the past[20]. Those statements clearly express that *fashizmi në Serbi është ideologji shtetërore* (fascism in Serbia is a state ideology[21]) and Serbia is perceived as *kolonializmit serb* (Serbian colonialism[22]), and the words *okupimit/pushtuesi serb* (occupation[23], Serbian occupier[24]), in a modest fashion, all the way through *regjimi serb maltretonte, arrestonte, burgoste e vriste shqiptarët* (the Serbian regime which has mistreated, arrested, imprisoned and killed Albanians[25]).

Thematic Context

When it comes to thematic context, one of the most significant findings is that among all analyzed texts, the context in which Serbia was mostly represented is interior politics in Kosovo (64 texts). This means that Serbia was treated in the context of interior political confrontation, as a point of political legitimization or de-legitimization, according to political actors' relation to Serbia. This is in line with the finding that these texts were written in somewhat (17 texts) or strongly (31) polarized narrative towards Serbia. The second thematic context within which Serbia was treated was taxes (38 texts). This topic was also used as a means of polarization - a third of all were strongly polarized (13), the other third contained somewhat polarization (12). Serbia was also presented in context of activities of Kosovo institutions and/or authorities in 31 texts. Even 84% of these texts were polarized (13 somewhat and 13 strongly). Dialogue and agreements between Serbia and Kosovo, which was the context of 18 texts differentiated type of narrative equally: 6 contained moderate, 6 somewhat and also 6 strongly polarized narratives. It is of great importance that 13 of 13 texts which presented

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[20] Index Online: "Vitet e 90-ta që pasuan, të gjithë i dimë, apart'heid, vdekje dhe shkatërrim, gjenocid dhe tentim për shfarosje por edhe rezistencë e qëndresë e hatashme e një populli që refuzon të nënshtrohet" (In the 1990s, we all faced apartheid, death and destruction, genocide and attempt of extermination, but also experienced resilience and resilience of a people who refused to surrender). https://indeksonline.net/kurti-trepca-eshte-thesar-publik-do-tia-kthejme-shkelqimin/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[21] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/tarifa-100-dhe-nje-pyetje-per-vjosen-e-albinin-ge/ , approached on June 2, 2020.

[22] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/tarifa-100-dhe-nje-pyetje-per-vjosen-e-albinin-ge/ , approached on June 2, 2020.

[23] https://www.botasot.info/sporti/1228422/fotografite-e-gani-kosumit-ne-kosove-shokuan-boten-pane-se-ku-luajten-sportistet-tane-nbsp/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[24] https://www.botasot.info/sporti/1228422/fotografite-e-gani-kosumit-ne-kosove-shokuan-boten-pane-se-ku-luajten-sportistet-tane-nbsp/, approached on June 2, 2020.

[25] https://www.botasot.info/sporti/1228422/fotografite-e-gani-kosumit-ne-kosove-shokuan-boten-pane-se-ku-luajten-sportistet-tane-nbsp/, approached on June 2, 2020.

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Serbia in the context of war crimes committed by the Serbian army and police in Kosovo were written in a strongly polarized manner. Strongly polarized narratives were observed in social, culture or even sport-related texts, which showed that potential space for cohesion is narrowed even within non-political topics (see thematic context and distribution in **Table 5**).

Table 5 – Thematic context and polarization of the narratives

Tematic context/polarization	moderate narrative	somewhat polarizing narrative	strongly polarizing narrative	total
interior politics in Kosovo	16	17	31	64
taxes	13	12	13	38
activities of Kosovo authorities/institutions	5	13	13	31
dialogue and agreements between Belgrade and Pristina	6	6	6	18
war crimes of the Serbian army and police	0	0	13	13
activities of Serbian authorities/institutions	2	4	6	12
recognition of Kosovo	5	3	1	9
Kosovo as a sovereign state	0	1	8	9
resolution of the Kosovo – Serbia relation	5	2	2	9
US policy towards Kosovo	4	3	1	8
regional relations	1	2	5	8
cultural and social life in Kosovo	1	1	5	7
other topics	9	5	11	25
total	**67**	**69**	**115**	**251**

In terms of cohesion and division, it is of great importance if media choose to present topics from We or Other ground or perspective, as well as the focus of the Other in that specific narrative. The Other in the primary focus, in a broader context, or just mentioned within selected topics creates specific thematic context, role and importance of the Other in it.

Focus

Media also choose to put certain topics in different plans – in front, as a primary focus, within a broader context or just through mentioning. Distribution of topics within those three

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plans is relevant for the representation of Serbia-related issues in terms of the fact if those texts are based on reporting about Serbia or Serbia-related issues are an object of discussion within other areas (see focus distribution in **Table 6**).

Table 6 – Thematic context and focus of the narratives

Thematic context /Focus	Primary focus	Mentioning	Broader context	Total
interior politics in Kosovo	29	16	19	64
taxes	33	0	5	38
activities of Kosovo authorities/institutions	24	3	4	31
dialogue and agreements between Belgrade and Pristina	17	0	1	18
war crimes of the Serbian army and police	12	0	1	13
activities of Serbian authorities/institutions	12	0	0	12
recognition of Kosovo	6	0	3	9
Kosovo as a sovereign state	8	0	1	9
resolution of the Kosovo – Serbia relation	9	0	0	9
US policy towards Kosovo	4	0	4	8
regional relations	3	1	4	8
cultural and social life in Kosovo	4	2	1	7
other topics	14	6	5	25
total	**175**	**28**	**48**	**251**

Hate speech

Hate speech was observed in 10 analyzed texts (4%), mainly focused on war crimes of the Serbian army and police (4 texts), highly polarizing, written by using very emotional and inflammatory speech. Reporting on interior politics in Kosovo provoked hate speech in 2 published texts and in one text each about activities of Kosovo authorities/institutions, Kosovo as a sovereign state, taxes resolution of the Kosovo – Serbia relations.

Actors

This analysis showed that the representation of actors was also an important means in the overall othering process. Their treatment in the narrative, before all, was the basis for some

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level of polarization in terms of relation to Serbia. The most represented individual actor was (then) Prime Minister Albin Kurti, who was mentioned in 157 texts. The polarized narrative was constructed in 75% of all texts which represent this actor (65 texts contains strongly and 52 somewhat polarizing narratives). Aleksandar Vucic, President of the Republic of Serbia, was mentioned three times less than Kurti as an actor in analyzed texts (55 texts). Texts in which this actor was represented were also highly polarized, but a bit less than in case of Kurti (71%) and most of them constructed strongly polarized narrative (23 strongly, and 16 somewhat polarizing narrative). Hashim Thaci and Ramus Haradinaj were also represented in numerous texts, which narrative was polarized at a certain level: 24 of 58 texts that mention Thaci are strongly polarized, and 18 of 39 that mention Haradinaj. It is interesting to highlight that MP Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku triggered polarizing narrative in 7 of all 8 texts, which thematized social media post and political debate around it (**table 7**).

Table 7 – Actors in the polarization context

Actor/polarization	Moderate narrative	Somewhat polarizing narrative	Strongly polarizing narrative	Total
Albin Kurti	40	52	65	157
Hashim Thaçi	16	18	24	58
Aleksanar Vucic	16	16	23	55
Ramush Haradinaj	8	13	18	39
Kadri Veseli	3	5	7	15
Isa Mustafa	2	5	8	15
Vjosa Osmani	4	6	3	13
Glauk Konjufca	5	4	4	13
Avdullah Hoti	6	4	1	11
Ana Brnabic	5	5	0	10
Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku	0	1	7	8
Marko Djuric	2	4	2	8
Behgjet Pacolli	0	3	1	4
Total	**107**	**136**	**163**	**406**

The main characteristic of polarization narratives constructed around selected actors is inflammatory or emotional speech. In the **table 8** level of emotionality is presented according to the specific actor presence:

Table 8 – Actors and the context of emotional engagement

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Actor/engagement	Detached language	Some emotional language	Very emotional - inflammatory language	Total
Albin Kurti	95	47	15	157
Aleksandar Vučić	34	15	6	55
Ana Brnabic	10	0	0	10
Abdullah Hoti	8	1	2	11
Behgjet Pacolli	2	2	0	4
Fatmire Mulhaxha Kollçaku	2	1	5	8
Glauk Konjufca	9	1	3	13
Hashim Thaçi	38	13	7	58
Isa Mustafa	11	2	2	15
Kadri Veseli	6	5	4	15
Marko Đurić	6	2	0	8
Ramush Haradinaj	22	15	2	39
Vjosa Osmani	8	4	1	13
Total	**251**	**108**	**47**	**406**

Comments on GazetaExpress Facebook profile

Analysis of narrative in comments of the GazetaExpress Facebook profile shows that public comments are most framed within three specific interpretation of Kosovo-Serbia relation: in a heroic frame (23%), the distance towards Serbia (22%) and traitor (22%). These types of comments are dominantly caused by strong polarization in the media narrative. Glorifying Kosovo independence which was in the main focus of comments, mostly as a reaction to strongly polarized texts (88%). Distance towards Serbia was a reaction to the more polarizing then moderate narrative, as well as traitor perspective. Comparing to media narrative in Kosovo word "Shkja – Shkije" was found in 14 analyzed comments, triggered by published texts.

Table 9 – Type of comments on GazzetaExpress FB page in the polarization context

Type of comments GazzetaExpress FB page	Moderate media narrative	Somewhat polarizing media narrative	Strongly polarizing media narrative	Total
heroic	10	6	114	130
distance	22	41	61	124

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traitor	17	38	66	121
explicit hate	20	5	13	38
self-victimization	19	6	4	29
supremacy of Kosovo	5	11	13	29
US/EU support to Kosovo	0	14	4	18
Serbia as aggressor	1	1	15	17
sovereignty of Kosovo	4	8	5	17
"Shkja – Shkije"	1	4	9	14
derogation of Serbia	4	3	5	12
cohesive	2	1	1	4
Illyrian myth	0	0	1	1
Russia support to Serbia	0	1	0	1
Kosovo as aggressor	0	0	0	0
Total	**105**	**139**	**311**	**555**

The similar distribution of the most frequent individual interpretations was observed, according to level of emotionality. The quite significant finding is that neutral media language, with the lowest level of emotionality, causes most comments, which indicates that explicit emotions in media narrative are not needed to trigger most common reactions, from heroism, distance toward Serbia, traitor, and even explicit hate.

Table 10 – Type of comments on GazzetaExpress FB page in the emotional engagement context

Type of comments GazzetaExpress FB page	Detached/neutral language	Some emotional language	Very emotional - inflammatory language	Total

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heroic	126	2	2	130
distance	109	15	0	124
traitor	94	26	1	121
explicit hate	36	1	1	38
self-victimization	23	6	0	29
supremacy of Kosovo	27	2	0	29
US/EU support to Kosovo	12	6	0	18
Serbia as aggressor	16	0	1	17
sovereignty of Kosovo	16	1	0	17
"Shkja – Shkije"	7	6	1	14
derogation of Serbia	12	0	0	12
cohesive	2	2	0	4
Illyrian myth	1	0	0	1
Russia support to Serbia	1	0	0	1
Kosovo as aggressor	0	0	0	0
Total	**482**	**67**	**6**	**555**

The main actors in comments are politicians who play a significant role in the political life of Kosovo and they trigger positive or negative comments. When they are presented negatively, it was noticed that they were delegitimized with a connection to Serbia.

Usually politicians are presented in comments as traitors, which is the case with Albin Kurti in the text[26] about taxes (title "Albin Kurti responds to the US: We are not removing taxes - big consequences are expected"). Reports on taxes also provoked comments that contain hate speech against Serbia. In one of the comments following the text[27] about Kurti telling that he will abolish taxes when reciprocity is established, is written, "why should we (Albanians) buy Serbian goods?".

Hate speech is also present in comments that are following text[28] about Kosovo Liberation Army, where one of the commentators writes "Serbs killed KLA". Texts in which the main topic was the US politics towards Kosovo, also provoked polarizing comments that

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[26] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/albin-kurti-i-kthen-pergjigje-shbase-nuk-e-heqim-taksen-priten-pasoja-te-medha-855/, approached on June 5, 2020

[27] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/kurti-taksa-100-hiqet-sapo-te-vendoset-reciprociteti/, approached on June 5, 2020

[28] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/zyrtari-i-pdkse-i-kerkon-deputetes-se-vvse-te-largohet-nga-jeta-publike-pas-fjaleve-kunder-uckse/, approached on June 5, 2020

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contain hate speech and traitor narrative. For example, in the text[29] about agreement on the airline, railway and highway between Serbia and Kosovo, hate speech against Serbs was identified, as well as an accusation for collaboration with Serbian authorities and comments criticizing Richard Grenell.

Victimization narrative is mostly present in comments that reacted to text[30] about Albin Kurti proposing the "Marshall Plan". In 12 of 26 polarizing comments on this text, Kosovo is represented as a victim of Serbia and its authorities.

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[29] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/grenell-marreveshjet-sot-u-arriten-fale-direktivave-te-qarta-te-presidentit-trump/, approached on June5, 2020

[30] https://www.gazetaexpress.com/cfare-eshte-plani-marshall-te-cilin-e-propozoi-albin-kurti-mbreme-ne-mynih/, approached on June 5, 2020

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KEY FINDINGS - SERBIA

Framing

The frames observed in Serbia media are also based on five different concepts built on a) ethnic belonging; b) nation/state; c) direction of international support; d) elements of the previous conflict; e) heroism-traitor. Serbian media mostly reproduce the self-victimization frame - 16% analyzed texts contain that interpretation. Serbian integrity frame, which presents Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia, and aggressor frame that constructs Kosovo actors as aggressors towards Serbian state and individuals, are the next most frequent, observed in 14% of the analyzed texts each. Kosovo founding myth is embedded in the ethnic Serbian frame (8%), which perpetuates the idea that Kosovo is the foundation of Serbia itself or "heart of Serbia". Actors from Kosovo are often framed as terrorists or criminals with the aim of collective delegitimization of people of Albanian origin (5%). Framing of Russian support towards Serbia regarding Kosovo and US support to Kosovo is almost equally represented in media narratives (5% each), but valued differently, which will be explained later. Within Serbian interior politics, any relation to Kosovo is used as a mechanism of delegitimization of political opponents – 3% of texts create a traitor frame. Finally, Kosovo independence frame, represented from the critical point of view, was noticed in 2% texts.

Frames and stereotypes

Stereotypes in Serbian media are mostly embedded in the aggressor frame, total 91% texts – 81% perpetuates, 8% upgrades and 2% problematize stereotypes. Narratives often recall past events that happened during the Kosovo war to delegitimize and criminalize KLA as an aggressor, as well as all the actors related to the battle for Kosovo independence. Also, when reporting on current political events, Serbian media often take perspective concerning KLA, and they label Kosovo political and social actors as terrorists/criminals/villains if manage to identify any kind of (in)direct connection to the Kosovo war. Aggression from Kosovo in this frame is directed towards Serbia, as a state, Serbian ethnic corpus, and especially the Serbian minority in Kosovo in the past and today. The third perspective of this frame is related to everyday criminal, when i.e. media point out the nationality of a person arrested for smuggling, robbery or similar crimes if he/she is of Albanian nationality, to represent all Albanian people as criminals.

This finding goes in line with the next most frequent stereotype-based frame, self-victimization: 82% texts are stereotyped in the interpretation that Serbia and its people are victims – collectively and individually - 76% perpetuate and 6% even upgrade stereotype. The

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perception goes towards the idea that Kosovo people "ripped apart" Serbian territory, "stole heart and soul" of the nation, ethnic and religious identity by "seizing sanctities"[31]. Also, within stories about the life of Serbian minority in Kosovo media inform their readers about repression and "fight for survival"[32] that the Serbian minority is subjected to.

Serbia integrity frame was a ground for 59 texts, of which 58% is stereotyped (51% perpetuated, 7% upgrade). Media have negated the existence of Kosovo as an independent state, its political structure or institutions and have presumed sovereignty over this territory[33]. This practice was conducted consistently, by adding a quotation mark on any Kosovo institution or even the name of the country (i.e. Kosovo "government", so-called Kosovo[34], fake state Kosovo[35], "Kosovo") or calling Kosovo "Sothern Serbian province". Also, media report about imaginary "victories" over Kosovo in the field of Serbian foreign politics by i.e. informing their readers that Serbian president "has destroyed some Kosovo leader(s)[36]" in a diplomatic battle and that Serbia "will not recognize Kosovo ever". Kosovo independence frame was discussed in 8 texts but was presumed only as an opposite to Serbia integrity frame (50% texts perpetuated stereotype).

Ethnic Serbian frame is based on Kosovo myth, on the whole idea that Kosovo is the "heart of Serbia" (33 texts). The best way to describe this perception are the claims that Kosovo is: "Serbian holy land", "fireside for centuries" and it was depicted through stereotypes within 73% of texts. Those and similar ideas were perpetuated in 46% and upgraded in 27% narratives.

The third subject in this picture – *The Important Other* could be seen through reports on Russian support to Serbia considering Kosovo and US politics toward Kosovo, which was mainly heavily criticized. US relation to Kosovo was observed through their demand for tax abolition and Serbian media tend to interpret that demand as a lack of support towards Kosovo

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[31] Vecernje novosti, *Srpska lista neće glasati za vladu Kurtija*, 03.02.2020

[32] https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3404097/djuric-posle-sastanka-s-politickim-predstavnicima-srba-na-kosmetu-srpska-lista-nece-podrzati-formiranje-vlade-na-kim, approached on June 5, 2020

[33] https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/drustvo/koronavirus-stigao-u-srbiju-dvojica-mladica-hospitalizovana-zbog-sumnje-da-su-zarazeni-2020-02-25, approached on June 5, 2020

[34] http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/489878/amerika-moze-uvede-kosovo-sef-evropske-diplomatije-porucio-sad-mogu-sve-same, approached on June 5, 2020

[35] https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/kosovo/amerika-odustaje-od-lazne-drzave-najjaci-udar-na-pristinu-trampov-specijalac-zaledio-albance-2020-02-11, approached on June 5, 2020

[36] https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3411639/ekskluzivno-vucic-ucutkao-kurtija-u-minhenu-umislio-si-da-si-velika-zvezda-pristinski-premijer-ni-rec-nije-rekao, approached on June 5, 2020

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and shift in the US foreign policy[37]. International supporter – the Russia frame is embedded in stereotypes in 64% of text and the US frame is strengthened with stereotypes in 81% of texts.

Legitimization frame – The traitor is represented in 14 texts only, but it is very important from the perspective of internal politics in Serbia. Opposition leaders, like Dragan Đilas, Marinika Tepić (Alliance for Serbia - AS), Sergej Trifunovic (Movement of free citizens - MFC) or Sulejman Ugljanin (Party of democratic action of Sandzak) are delegitimized by pro-regime tabloids with the claim that they do recognize Kosovo as an independent state or support political actors from Kosovo. Mainly, those texts are based on false claims or fabrications, equipped with sensationalistic headlines; they insult and provoke readers to react, because 71% of analyzed texts within the legitimization frame contain stereotypes. The heroic frame was not noticed in the Serbian media since the whole analyzed narrative has been leaning towards self-victimization.

Table 11 – Presence of stereotypes in each observed frame

Frame/Stereotype	without stereotypes	perpetuates stereotypes	problematizes stereotypes	upgrades stereotypes	total
self - victimization	13	53	0	4	70
aggressor	5	48	1	5	59
Serbia integrity	25	30	0	4	59
ethnic Serbian frame	9	15	0	9	33
international support - Russia	8	13	1	0	22
international support - US	4	16	0	1	21
legitimization frame - traitor	4	9	0	1	14
Kosovo independence	4	4	0	0	8
total	**241**	**253**	**4**	**26**	**524**

Frames and sources

The most information in analyzed texts originated from official Serbian sources – 32% of all named sources. This type of source was dominantly grounded in the self-victimization frame (29 texts) and the Serbia integrity frame (27). The second most frequent type of sources are foreign sources, distributed evenly in international supporter – Russia (14 texts), self-

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[37] https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/info/jamajka-je-pod-velikim-pritiskom-u-tome-ucestvuje-sad-srbija-nastavlja-borbu-za-povlacenje-priznanja-2020-02-21, approached on June 5, 2020

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victimization (13), international support – US and Serbian integrity (12 each) and the aggressor frame – 7 texts. The presence of Serbian social actors was also visible and maily concentrated towards self-victimization and Serbia integrity (14 texts each), the aggressor (9), international support – US and Russia (8 each). Actors from Kosovo – official sources are present in texts where Serbia integrity was reinforced (12), the self-victimization concept is perpetuated (10) in opposition to the aggressor frame (9 texts). Social actors from Kosovo could be found in texts that are predominantly framed in self-victimization and aggressor frame (7 and 8, respectively). The voice of Serbian political actors from Kosovo has been heard within 21 texts, within self-victimization and aggressor frame (3 each).

The other sources in analyzed narratives were Kosovo and Serbian media (18 and 26 texts respectively), regional political and social sources (20) and 18 texts were based on information obtained from unnamed sources.

Balance

Serbian media did not report in a balanced manner towards topics and actors related to Kosovo in 65% analyzed texts. Media published 150 neutral texts, written using moderate speech, and could be observed as balanced. About 54% of texts are collaborative, 45% are neutral and only 0,7% texts (all published in Politika daily) challenge the dominant narrative. Strong polarization characterizes a collaborative approach (56%), but also this approach could be noticed in texts where the narrative is moderate or moderately polarizing. The dominant narrative has been rarely challenged and this result could be perceived as an incident, not a practice (**table 12**).

Table 12 – Polarization in the role of media context

Polarization/Dominant narrative perspective	Collaborative	Neutral	Challenging	Total
moderate narrative	47	150	3	200
somewhat polarising narrative	54	33	0	87
strongly polarising narrative	128	10	0	138
total	**229**	**193**	**3**	**425**

If we observe findings by media, strongly polarizing narratives are present in 37% texts published in Kurir online, 32% in Informer, 31% in Srbija danas, 29% in Politika and 25% in Vecernje novosti. This result should be put in the perspective of a media role: strongly polarizing narratives are predominantly collaborative – all strongly polarized texts in Informer are collaborative, 96% texts in Srbija danas and Kurir, 90% - Vecernje novosti i 86% - Politika

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(**table 13**). Topics and actors related to Kosovo are represented within the most balanced approach in about one-third of texts in Politika, Kurir online and Informer, and the most balanced texts are noticed in Vecernje novosti (47%). Srbija danas took a balanced approach within 27% only.

Table 13 – Strongly polarizing speech in the role of media context

Strongly polarizing speech/media	collaborative	neutral	total
Informer	22	0	22
Kurir.rs	26	1	27
Politika	32	5	37
Srbijadanas.rs	22	1	23
Večernje novosti	26	3	29
total	128	10	138

Level of emotional engagement is increased in 52% texts - some emotional language contains 27% narratives, and 25% is based on very emotional or inflammatory language (**table 14**). When reporting on Kosovo or topics related to Kosovo, detached language has been used in 56% texts in Politika, 55% reports in Vecernje novosti, 44% texts in Srbija danas, followed by 42% in Kurir online and 37% in Informer.

Table 14 – Polarization and emotional engagement context

Polarization/ Emotional engagement	Detached language	Some emotional language	Very emotional or inflammatory language	Total
neutral	159	27	7	193
collaborative	45	87	97	229
challenging	2	0	1	3
total	206	114	105	425

Observed narratives that include inflammatory language are often originated from official sources, such as Office for Kosovo and Metohija, or are related to the different aspects of interior or foreign politics. Within interior politics, media often fabricate information to defame opposition. A good example is a headline from Kurir online: *Scandal! Sergej (Trifinovic, MFC leader) praised Kurti and made Serbs anger: You woke an Albanian in yourself, you recognized so-called Kosovo!*[38] The text under this headline was related to the

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[38] *Skandalozno! Sergej hvalio Kurtija, pa razbesneo Srbe: Probudio se Albanac u tebi, priznao si tzv. Kosovo!*, https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3405479/skandalozno-sergej-hvalio-kurtija-pa-razbesneo-srbe-probudio-se-albanac-u-tebi-priznao-si-tzv-kosovo, approached on June 5, 2020.

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Twitter message where Trifunovic congratulated Kurti and expressed his wishes that his election will contribute normalization of Kosovo-Serbia relations. Most of the information was literally fabricated and meant to shift the anger of the public towards Trifunovic[39]. This toxic narrative is a prime example of advocacy journalism and shows the approach of Serbian pro-regime tabloids: they use even hint of cohesive narrative against political opponents (opposition) to represent them in a traitor frame.

Direct hate speech and inflammatory language is present in the statements of state representatives. One of the state officials who advocates animosity and inflammatory language is Minister of defense, Aleksandar Vulin. In all of his published statements he calls people of Albanian origin "Siptar" and implies their "intentions to attack Serbia" - verbally, politically or military (*Kurti is preparing for the war?! He enforces army and sues Serbia for genocide…he chooses convicted Serb killer for his war hawk*[40]). In that manner he increased the gap and furthered polarizes the gap. The damage that could be caused is even more serious when state officials promote this kind of narrative, because it could be perceived as an official political agenda towards Kosovo and its people within the aggressor frame. The other approach was observed when media present statements of Marko Đurić, head of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija. Those narratives are situated in self-victimization frame and often refer to "pogrom" of Serbian people from Kosovo. The following citation illustrates this practice: "Head of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija Marko Djuric stated that on the Serbian land, on "grounds soaked with blood", 12 years ago, fake Kosovo state started to rise. He has called that state house of injustice, discrimination, hijacking and proscription of Serbian people"[41].

Inflammatory narratives are also observed from the personal perspective of Serbian people originated from Kosovo. It is often presented as a testimony about tragic events that they experience in Kosovo i.e. as observed in a text published in Kurir online – "Horrifying testimony of Mira Kosovka: My brother was butchered, my mother was slaughtered! After all, I have one wish only!" Tragic events and personal pain are to be remembered, but a presentation

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[39] Under this headline, 33 comments were published, of which 8 within traitor frame.

[40] Kurti se sprema za rat?! Jača vojsku i tuži Srbiju za genocid... za svog jastreba imenovao osuđenog ubicu srba! https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3404999/kurti-se-sprema-za-rat-jaca-vojsku-i-tuzi-srbiji-za-genocid-za-svog-jastreba-imenovao-osudjenog-ubicu-srba, approached on June 5, 2020.

[41] Direktor Kancelarije za KiM Marko Đurić ocenioje daje pre 12 godina „na krvavim temeljima", na srpskoj zemlji, počela da niče lažna država Kosovo koju je nazvao kućom nepravde, diskriminacije, otimačine i progona srpskog naroda (Politika, 18.02.2020, *Lažna država Kosovo - kuća nepravde i otimačine*).

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of those narratives should be considered carefully, in order not to provoke hatred and further polarization[42].

Narratives such as *Tramp put hands around Kurti's neck, Siptar has to withdraw taxes[43]* are dedicated to the foreign politics and contextualize supposed withdrawal of US support towards Kosovo. The battle on the ground of foreign politics is also transferred on the concepts of frames – *Strong support "behind" taxes*[44] is an example of text where the relationship between Kosovo and Serbia is observed via those perspectives. Although the main focus is on German and "Western centers of power" politics towards Kosovo, both frames are visible – the US, which supports Kosovo and asks Serbia for recognition and "Russian factor" that "protect Serbian interests".

Thematic context

Life of Serbs in Kosovo is the most frequent thematic context of all analyzed texts, which indicates that media in Serbia mostly report on life conditions of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, more than on political issues between Serbia and Kosovo in a narrow sense (dialogue, political activities, etc.).

Within more than 60% of all these texts, we have identified some level of polarization in the narrative; even half of them were strongly polarized. Interior politics in Kosovo was the theme of almost 8% of texts, which were also a broad ground for polarization, but comparing to previous, this context caused a slightly lower level of polarization. It is important to point out that the next four most frequent thematic contexts – the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, taxes, US policy towards Kosovo and solution of Kosovo issue, were written in more moderate than polarizing narrative.

Activities of political institutions and authorities in Serbia were thematic context for 5% of published texts in the analyzed period, more of them were polarizing (57%) then moderate (43%), but this narrative did not cause as much strong polarization, as the next thematic context did. Kosovo recognition in one-third of all texts was strongly polarized and besides, even more somewhat polarizing (38%). The analysis shows that in the context of interior politics in Serbia (5%), introducing Kosovo polarizes narrative strongly (in 40% of texts), or it does not contain any polarizing elements (60%). Kosovo, in a regional context, was

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[42] *Stravična ispovest Mire Kosovke: Brata su mi unakazili, a majku zaklali! Posle svega imam samo jednu želju!*, https://www.kurir.rs/stars/3416527/stravicna-ispovest-mire-kosovke-brata-su-mi-unakazili-a-majku-zaklali-posle-svega-imam-samo-jednu-zelju, approached on June 5, 2020.

[43] *Tramp pridavio Kurtija: Šiptar mora da ukine takse!*, *Informer*, 07.02.2020

[44] *Iza takse jaka "leđa"*, Vecernje novosti, 19.02.2020

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identified as a thematic context of 4% of analyzed texts; more of them were polarized, mostly in a strong way. Locally relevant issues in Kosovo were the main topic in the same number of texts, but this group contained less polarized narrative - more than half of these texts were neutral (57%). Kosovo-related topics were often observed within international politics and policies: Russian approach was the context in 4% texts and the EU in more than 3%. The same number of both thematic contexts did not cause polarization but in polarizing narrative Russia caused more polarization – in one-third of texts, compared with the EU – in one-fifth of texts.

Strong polarization is identified in texts about KLA war crimes issues: only 1 of all 14 texts did not polarize narrative, but more than 71% were extremely polarized. Also, strong polarization was identified in texts about Kosovo institutions and authorities. Among these texts, 80% contained a strongly polarizing narrative and only 20% had moderate narrative. Attitude towards Kosovo as part of Serbia was contextualized in line with the ignorance of Kosovo as an independent state. More than half of these texts were polarized (40% strongly), but the thematic context of Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia caused polarization in 100% of texts (more than 70% contained strong polarization). Social and cultural issues in Serbia were also the ground for high polarization towards Kosovo. Two-third of these texts were polarized, 56% strongly.

NATO military intervention was identified as the thematic context in less than 2% of analyzed texts. More than 80% of them did not contain any polarization towards Kosovo. It must be pointed out that the media criticized NATO in these texts, but this media orientation was not used as an argument for polarization in Kosovo-Serbia relation. Serbian foreign policies as a thematic context caused half a moderate and half polarizing narrative in less than 2% of texts. Intensive polarization was identified in texts which were representing Albanians in criminal context (more than 80%) and only one was written moderately. Life of Albanian minority in Serbia was a thematic context for mostly moderate narrative in two-third of texts. The analysis identified one text in this context with some level of polarization and one was used for strong narrative polarization. The Greater Albania as a concept is, on the other side, point of strong polarization. This thematic context was identified in 1% of texts. 80% of this narrative was strongly polarized and 20% had a lower level of polarization between Serbia and Kosovo.

Table 15 – Thematic context and polarization of the narratives

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Thematic context/polarization	Moderate narrative	Somewhat polarizing narrative	Strongly polarizing narrative	Total
life of Serbs in Kosovo	14	4	18	36
interior politics in Kosovo	10	12	10	32
dialogue and agreements between Belgrade and Pristina	19	5	7	31
taxes	17	7	6	30
US policy towards Kosovo	19	5	5	29
resolution of the Kosovo – Serbia relation	13	6	4	23
activities of Serbian authorities/institutions	10	9	4	23
recognition of Kosovo	6	8	7	21
interior politics in Serbia	11	0	9	20
regional relations	8	3	8	19
locally relevant issues in Kosovo	11	3	5	19
Russia policy/politics towards Kosovo	12	3	3	18
The EU policy/politics towards Kosovo	12	1	2	15
KLA war crimes	1	3	10	14
activities of Kosovo authorities/institutions	2	0	8	10
Kosovo as part of Serbia	4	2	4	10
social and cultural issues in Serbia	3	1	5	9
Kosovo as a sovereign state	0	2	5	7
NATO intervention	5	1	0	6
Serbian foreign policy	3	2	1	6
criminalization of Albanians	1	0	5	6
life of Albanians in Serbia	4	1	1	6
The Greater Albania	0	1	4	5
Kosovo recognition revoking	3	2	0	5
Kosovo Army creation	0	2	2	4
historical topics	3	0	1	4
other topics	9	4	4	17
total	200	87	138	425

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Distribution of topics by media shows that there are significant differences between "old" and new media narratives. The most frequent thematic contexts in Vecernje novosti and Politika are the life of Serbs in Kosovo and dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. These topics are much less frequent in tabloids which most frequently contextualize Kosovo in terms of interior politics in Kosovo.

Beside dialogue and life conditions, the most frequent thematic contexts in Politika are taxes and recognition of Kosovo. In Vecernje novosti thematic frequencies are in the favor of the international context of Kosovo – relation with the US and the EU. Thematic distribution in tabloids shows that the US relation to Kosovo is a common and highly frequent theme. There are also some differences between tabloids. Kurir is the closest to the "old" media, favoring the context of life conditions of the Serbian minority in Kosovo and frequently reports on resolution of Kosovo – Serbia relationship. Informer thematizes Russian position towards Kosovo, dialogue, taxes and, very significantly, a regional relations of Serbia within which it compares Kosovo with Montenegro. Topics distribution in Srbija danas indicates that this tabloid reports on daily basis, in terms of topics such as taxes.

Focus

Considering topics in a certain plan – the primary focus of the text, topic in a different broader context, just a mentioning – also causes a different representation of Serbia-Kosovo relation in media. Analysis of media in Serbia shows that topics on Kosovo are mostly at the forefront of the narrative, but there are some specific thematic areas in which Kosovo is part of a broader context, or is just mentioned. Regional relations are the most frequent topics within which Kosovo is mostly just mentioned (73%).

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Table 16 – Thematic context and focus of the narratives

Thematic context/polarization	Primary focus	Mentioning	Broader context	Total
life of Serbs in Kosovo	32	2	2	36
interior politics in Kosovo	31	1	0	32
dialogue and agreements between Belgrade and Pristina	24	5	2	31
taxes	26	0	4	30
US policy towards Kosovo	22	2	5	29
resolution of the Kosovo – Serbia relation	15	3	5	23
activities of Serbian authorities/institutions	11	9	3	23
recognition of Kosovo	14	6	1	21
interior politics in Serbia	11	6	3	20
regional relations	1	14	4	19
locally relevant issues in Kosovo	18	1	0	19
Russia policy/politics towards Kosovo	6	5	7	18
The EU policy/politics towards Kosovo	9	3	3	15
KLA war crimes	13	0	1	14
activities of Kosovo authorities/institutions	9	1	0	10
Kosovo as part of Serbia	6	4	0	10
social and cultural issues in Serbia	0	5	4	9
Kosovo as a sovereign state	7	0	0	7
NATO intervention	3	0	3	6
Serbian foreign policy	5	0	1	6
criminalization of Albanians	3	1	2	6
life of Albanians in Serbia	5	0	1	6
The Greater Albania	4	0	1	5
Kosovo recognition revoking	5	0	0	5
Kosovo Army creation	4	0	0	4
historical topics	0	2	2	4
other topics	13	3	1	17
total	297	73	55	425

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Hate speech

Media in Serbia perpetuate hate speech twice as much as in Kosovo - 8% of all analyzed texts contain explicit hate speech towards Kosovo. Hate speech is mostly identified in Informer, more than all other media together. Almost 30% of all published texts in Informer during the analyzed period contained hate speech. Tabloid Kurir and Srbija danas have much less hate speech in their narrative: Kurir 10%, Srbija danas 6%. Among "old" media, Večernje novosti published less than 2% of content with hate speech identified and in Politika explicit hate speech was not identified.

Table 17 – Presence of hate speech in observed media narrative

Media/hate speech	yes	no	total
Informer	20	48	68
Kurir.rs	7	64	71
Srbijadanas.rs	4	66	70
Večernje novosti	2	103	105
Politika	0	111	111
total	**33**	**392**	**425**

Hate speech in media in Serbia is commonly based on mentions of the term „Šiptar"[45]. Among 30 texts that contain hate speech, 22 or 60% contain this term. Other texts with hate speech refer to the presentation of Kosovo as a criminal entity and Kosovo actors as terrorists, war criminals, etc.

Actors

Representation of actors from Kosovo and Serbia is also the basis for some level of polarization between two states. Selection of actors, their attitude and their role in the text determine the narrative and cause a ground for a certain level of cohesion or division between these entities. The most presented actor in texts regarding Kosovo in analyzed media is Aleksandar Vucic, the President of the Republic of Serbia (35% of texts). In almost half of the published texts which represent Vucic, the polarized narrative was identified, strongly and somewhat - equally. A higher level of polarization was identified in texts that mention (then) Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti, as the second most presented actor (in 29% of texts). Almost one-third of texts with this actor were strongly polarized, but 42% of the narrative around Kurti was moderate. Polarization in the narrative is higher when it comes to the next

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[45] The term "Siptar" if used out of Albanian community is not acceptable for Albanians. The perception of that term does not only matter of language, it carries a different set of historical and cultural meanings and acquires political connotation in the context of Serbian society.

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most frequent actor, Hashim Thaçi, the President of Kosovo. He is presented in 14% of texts, but almost half of these mentions caused strong polarizing narrative and only 30% of texts presenting Thaçi could be considered moderate. Among most represented Serbian political actors in the analyzed period are Ivica Dacic, Marko Djuric, Ana Brnabic and Milovan Drecun. Djuric and Drecun, whose political function is directly related to Kosovo, generate higher polarization than the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Half of the texts with Marko Djuric as actor were strongly polarized and 30% were moderated. Milovan Drecun is also half presented in the strongly polarized narrative, but only 15% of texts presenting Drecun can be considered as moderate. Ivica Dacic is more represented in texts regarding Kosovo (11%) than Ana Brnabic (8%). Around 55% of texts mentioning Dacic and Brnabic contains some level of polarization. Vjosa Osmani and Vlora Çitaku are also in a group of most relevant actors from Kosovo. Osmani is mentioned in 4% of texts, only one-third of texts were moderate. Çitaku is less represented (2%) and half of the narrative with this actor was moderate.

Table 17 - Actors in the polarization context

Actors/polarization	Moderate narrative	Somewhat polarizing narrative	Strongly polarizing narrative	Total
Aleksandar Vucic	78	35	36	149
Albin Kurti	53	28	43	124
Hashim Thaçi	18	15	27	60
Ivica Dacic	20	8	18	46
Marko Djuric	12	8	20	40
Ana Brnabic	15	8	11	34
Ramush Haradinaj	8	8	16	32
Aleksandar Vulin	7	7	12	26
Vjosa Osmani	5	3	8	16
Milovan Drecun	2	5	6	13
Vlora Çitaku	2	3	5	10
total	**213**	**121**	**190**	**524**

Some degree of emotionality mostly is identified in the narrative with frequently mentioned actors in texts regarding Kosovo in Serbian media. The following table presents the level of emotionality according to the specific actor presence:

Table 18 - Actors and the context of emotional engagement

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Actor/ engagement	Detached language	Some emotional language	Very emotional - inflammatory language	Total
Aleksandar Vucic	80	50	19	149
Albin Kurti	57	33	34	124
Hashim Thaçi	23	18	19	60
Ivica Dacic	22	15	9	46
Marko Djuric	15	9	16	40
Ana Brnabic	17	10	7	34
Ramush Haradinaj	8	11	13	32
Vjosa Osmani	6	4	6	16
Milovan Drecun	3	5	5	13
Vlora Çitaku	1	5	4	10
total	232	160	132	524

Comments on Kurir.rs

Part of this analysis was dedicated to explore public narrative caused by published texts in this period. Analyzed comments showed a set of 15 different narratives, generated around different public perception of Serbia-Kosovo relation. Comments sampled on the Kurir.rs website indicate that comparing to the media narrative, public narrative on Kosovo is even more divisive. The most frequent interpretation of Kosovo in these comments is in line with the frame of Kosovo as a founding myth of Serbia, which implies the founding myth of Serbia as a nation, the glorious Serbian history and emphasizes the Orthodox religion[46]. This interpretation is even stronger in the sense of Serbian ethnic integrity, because of its historical and collective-emotional argument of Kosovo as an integral part and origin of Serbia. The significant finding is that more than 82% of mythical interpretation of Kosovo in comments is caused by polarized media narrative (50% are caused by strongly polarized media narrative).

On the other side, five times less frequent type of public narrative is cohesive one, which is to a similar extent caused by – moderate media narrative (77%). Cohesive comments that were found mostly emphasize president of Serbia and his positive work for the country, so there is an assumption that those are so-called „bot comments". Comparing these two findings indicates that there is a general causal relationship between media and public narrative: moderate media narrative spreads in public space towards cohesion, the same as the polarization

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[46] The most common comments illustrating the Kosovo myth read „Kosovo is Serbia" (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3416635/strasan-ultimatum-zapada-srbiji-priznajte-kosovo-pa-ulazite-u-eu/komentari) . Also, a text (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3411303/potpisano-u-minhenu-beograd-i-pristina-stavili-potpis-obnavlja-se-zeleznicka-veza) about railway agreement between Kosovo and Serbia provoked a lot of comments that contain the Kosovo myth narrative.

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narratives intensify public narrative towards division and deepening the gap between Serbia and Kosovo. Type of comments distribution concerning media narrative as a cause is presented in the following table:

Table 19 - Type of comments (Kurir.rs) in polarization context

Type of comments (Kurir.rs)	Moderate media narrative	Somewhat polarizing media narrative	Strongly polarizing media narrative	Total
Kosovo as founding myth	58	107	168	333
cohesive	53	8	8	69
self-victimization	7	9	22	38
explicit hate	4	4	23	31
distance	8	9	12	29
traitor	1	0	27	28
Supremacy of Kosovo	6	6	12	24
heroic	4	4	11	19
Kosovo as aggressor	12	0	6	18
derogation of Kosovo	5	2	8	15
Kosovo as "fake" state	2	6	7	15
US/EU support to Kosovo	6	2	4	12
Russia support to Serbia	3	1	5	9
"Shiptar"	0	0	1	1
Serbia as aggressor	0	0	0	0
Total	**169**	**158**	**314**	**641**

Comments considered from the point of emotional presence in media narrative are showing that the most widespread divisive public narrative (Kosovo as the mythological origin of Serbia) is mostly caused by some level of emotionality in the media narrative. 60% of texts published on Kurir.rs with certain, but not inflammatory, degree of emotionality, were starting points for "mythical" consideration of Kosovo. The analysis showed that this level of emotions in the narrative is in line with texts in which political officials are presented, as well as state politics towards Kosovo. This indicates that the official political narrative in Serbia is one of the causes for the maintenance of public divisive narratives towards Kosovo. In comments[47]

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[47] A text (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3405479/skandalozno-sergej-hvalio-kurtija-pa-razbesneo-srbe-probudio-se-albanac-u-tebi-priznao-si-tzv-kosovo) in which the president of the opposition „Movement of free citizens" Sergej Trifunovic praised newly elected Prime Minister of Kosovo Albin Kurti provoked comments that contain traitor narrative and also text (https://www.kurir.rs/sport/fudbal/3415763/cuveni-lane-porucio-mladom-ivicu-crvene-linije-se-ne-prelaze-ilija-trebalo-je-da-cekas-srbiju) that talks about Serbian football player Ilija Ivić who decided to play for the Kosovo national football team

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there was also a treacherous narrative in which commentators moralize about actors who were characterized as traitors and usually hate speech follows the traitor narrative. Also, narrative Kosovo as the aggressor was mostly present in comments referring to the text[48] about dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. US/EU support to Kosovo narrative was found in comments that refer to texts[49] about US politics towards Kosovo.

Table 20 - Type of comments (Kurir.rs) in emotional context

Type of comments (Kurir.rs)	detached/ neutral language	some emotional language	very emotional - inflammatory language	Total
Kosovo as a founding myth	104	202	27	333
cohesive	46	20	3	69
self-victimization	16	14	8	38
explicit hate	4	12	15	31
distance	7	18	4	29
traitor	1	16	11	28
supremacy of Kosovo	11	7	6	24
heroic	4	2	13	19
Kosovo as the aggressor	13	1	4	18
derogation of Kosovo	6	2	7	15
Kosovo as "fake" state	8	6	1	15
US/EU support to Kosovo	6	5	1	12
Russia support to Serbia	1	7	1	9
"Shiptar"	1	0	0	1
Serbia as the aggressor	0	0	0	0
Total	**228**	**312**	**101**	**641**

The presence of hate speech in comments also indicates an important characteristic of the narrative division between Serbia and Kosovo. Explicit hate speech is rare. Comments that contain hate speech and that underestimate the sovereignty of Kosovo or people that support

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[48] A text (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3407793/taci-dijalog-s-vucicem-neizbezan-jer-ga-je-izabrao-srpski-narod-grenel-radi-odlican-posao/komentari) which refers to Hashim Tachi's statement that dialogue with President of Serbia is inevitable provoked comments that contain narrative Kosovo as the aggressor

[49] A text (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3415125/amerika-ozbiljno-zapretila-pristini-ako-ne-ukinu-takse-srbiji-sad-povlaci-vojne-trupe-sa-kosmeta) talks about on US threats to Kosovo over imposed taxes provoked US support Kosovo narrative in comments

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the independence of Kosovo were cases of explicit hate[50]. The division between Serbia and Kosovo is dominantly constructed on a specific structure, which is in the ground of public understanding of Kosovo. This structure enables a certain level of polarization, which is emotionally and stereotype-based, and, most importantly, invisible on the surface. It enables perpetuating the same pattern of public perception of Kosovo deeply rooted in the collective memory.

Conclusion

This analysis showed that media in Serbia and Kosovo do participate in the process of othering between two entities, as well as they maintain the presence of *Important other* as an international supporter (US and Russia) in the media narrative. Explicit hate speech in Serbian and Kosovo media is mostly avoided, so the othering process is dominantly conducted on the structural basis of media work, through the specific topic and thematic context selection, media framing, sources selection, level of polarization, emotions, reference to the past, perpetuation of stereotypes, as well as specific journalistic forms of the text. It is also found that this kind of media narrative is spreading on the broader public narrative and determinates further division (more than cohesion) between Serbia and Kosovo in the public space of both states.

Although it can be concluded that both Serbia and Kosovo media narratives are mostly oriented towards division than cohesion, there are some significant differences. Media in Serbia are opposing to Kosovo more explicitly, through sensationalistic reporting, fake news, disinformation, strong emotional journalism, in an unprofessional manner (media reporting was criticized by Press Council several times). Kosovo is in Serbian narrative permanently present, as part of different topics and areas, it is a means for political de-legitimization, but also for self-legitimization, as a key point in the collective memory of Serbian political identity.

Compared to Serbia, the Kosovo media narrative on Serbia-Kosovo relation is mostly focused on specific extensive, tendentious narrative, which is more deeply interpreting the relation between two states. Facts selection, arguments, analysis and consistency in the creation of this kind of narrative is more in line with regulatory and public norms. Avoiding publicly and professionally non-acceptable narrative can be illustrated with the example that in media

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[50] A text (https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/3413793/dua-lipa-pronovo-provocira-pevacica-cestitala-samoproglasenu-nezavisnost-pokrajine-srbi-joj-porucili-kosovo-je-srbija/komentari) in which the singer Dua Lipa congratulates the independence of Kosovo provoked lot of comments that contain hate speech and underestimating

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in Kosovo we could not find the word "Shkja – Shkije[51]", which was not the case with Serbian narrative and the word "Siptar". Media in Kosovo show more intensive ideological work, comparing to Serbia, which is more explicit towards Kosovo and its representation.

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[51] The same derogatory meaning as word "Siptar" in Serbian society, carries the word Shkije/Shkje/Shki when used by Albanians for the Serbian community.

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