

THE MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN ARMED CONFLICTS – THE CNN EFFECT

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The media, politics and public opinion are interdependent social categories. Their interdependence is particularly emphasized in armed conflicts, especially in the context of armed interventions. The forum of interaction of the mentioned phenomena is framed by the paradigm of strategic communication, which, through the actions of entities identified as strategic communicators, is transferred to the public in order to achieve a motivating effect for reactions that are in accordance with communicators' interests. One of the manifestations of the implementation of strategic communication in all its forms and contents is the CNN effect. In this paper, the CNN effect is defined as a broader term than the television station that it has been named after. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the relationship between politics, the media and the public in the function of gaining public support for military intervention. Moreover, the CNN effect is analyzed in the function of strategic communication, on the example of the media use of the bloodshed on the Markale market in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, as well as actions and effects on the US public to support the idea of military intervention.

Kej words: *strategic communications, armed intervention, public opinion, CNN effect, Markale*

Strategic communications – the interaction of the media, public and politics

Christopher Paul defines strategic communications as a set of coordinated actions, messages, images and other forms of signalling or engaging intended to inform, influence or persuade selected public to support national goals.¹

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The functions of strategic communications in influencing policies, especially those related to foreign policy and deployment of forces in military interventions are diverse:

- Setting a topic. An agenda is defined, a topic is pointed out, the media is focusing on some news that they are being managed.
- Organization support. Strategic communication is in synergy with general organizational goals by its actions and results and integrated into the results of the organization's mission.
- Effects on audience. The task of strategic communication is to achieve the engagement of the target public in achieving organizational goals, and not just to inform them. The result is measured on the basis of the degree of engagement of the target public in the support of views, logic, values, beliefs, which lead to a change in behaviour in accordance with organizational goals.
- Impact on policy change. Strategic communicators use firm data from research, both of public opinion and trends and goals of political elite, so communication is tailored to the target opinion leaders, who influence policy changes.
- Basis. Lobbyists and research institutions need sophisticated "research" plans that include strategic communications.
- Planning. A master plan and foresight are necessary because in a high-tech society information, even false one, penetrates the public very quickly, and rebuttal and re-establishing trust and reputation are an expression of crisis relations with the public, with uncertain consequences.
- Resource rationalization. Using new technology, such as social media, small or less wealthy organizations can make the same impact as larger or richer entities if they develop healthy strategies. Consequently, budgets no longer play a crucial role in the effects of strategic communications.²

Current politics and media that correlate in the context of conflicts are in an intense relationship and conditionality. In the age of globalization, the media represent a mediator between the public and political entities, exerting an influence on both of these entities. At the same time, they are the subject of the influence of the political elite, as well as the attitude of the public.

War, media, politics

War and the media have a historical developmental correlation with each other. From the middle of the eighteenth century until today, the development of war, as a social phenomenon, has followed the media development. The media represented a link between the elite that waged wars and the public that directly or indirectly participated in

¹ Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates*, ABC-CLIO, 2011.

² Impact Initiative, „How to do...Strategic Communications”, *Initiative for International Development*.

wars, as a basis for developing the public motivation to participate in war.³ The research in the field of conditionality and interaction between war and the media indicates that the media development, as well as the society development and war with it, depended on technological innovation, and also on the innovative implementation of organizational models. In modern warfare, the media have a very important role, especially from the point of view of the fact that in pursuit of geopolitical, economic and other strategic interests one strives for less devastating, that is, as effective as possible non-destructive ways of achieving goals. In practice, modern media, especially when it comes to the attitude towards war, are increasingly faced with the danger of identifying themselves with public relations instead of objective informing and are becoming the management function of political elites or some interest groups. Namely, in relation to war and armed conflicts, the media are in a constant dilemma of questioning whether and how to become an objective control mechanism within the democratic social system from the position of "tools" for gaining support, hearts and souls of the public.⁴

Considering that war and armed conflict in general, from the point of view of engaged resources and level of set goals, is the activity of the highest, strategic importance for nation, communications related to the condition of preparation, execution and exploitation of results or elimination of undesirable effects of war, are strategic communications.⁵ Taking into account that modern conflicts have the changed physiognomy, that they are less and less destructive, and that they strive to "take over, and not destroy" the opponent, it can be concluded that warfare today is less and less of "Clausewitz" nature and more and more hybrid.⁶ Operations planning becomes multidomain, with domains being also non-physical spaces (cyber and the media).⁷ Moreover, modern warfare is multidimensional because it implies the engagement of all available resources in accordance with the domain in which it is carried out, as well as with the level of set goals.⁸ Technological changes have enabled the speed and reach of information, the diffuse impact on information and shifted socio-cultural norms. The importance of socio-psychological and economic-behavioral influence on the results of military operations is emphasized.⁹ In practice, the unified paradigm of planning future operations represents an integrated approach to developing a multidimensional operation, which respects all

³ Seethaler Josef, Karmasin Matthias, Melischek Gabriele and Wöhlert Romy (Ed.), *Selling War - The Role of the Mass Media in Hostile Conflicts from World War I to the 'War on Terror'*, Bristol: Intellect, 2013.

⁴ Miroslav Mitrović, "Rat i mediji - povezanost, uslovljenost i evolucija fenomena", *Zbornik matice srpske za društvene nauke*, 2020 (in print).

⁵ Miroslav Mitrović, "Strateška komunikacija u funkciji nacionalne bezbednosti", *Vojno delo*, 1/19, 2019, pp. 41-54.

⁶ Miroslav Mitrović, Nebojša Nikolić, *Hibridni rat*, Beograd: Medija centar "Obrana", 2020 (in print).

⁷ KC Reid, "Reconceiving Modern Warfare A Unified Model", *JFQ* 96, 1st Quarter 2020, pp. 12-19.

⁸ Gregory C. Radabaugh, "The Practical Implications of Information as a Joint Function", *JFQ* 89, 2nd Quarter 2018, pp. 15-17.

⁹ Scott K. Thomson and Christopher E. Paul, "Paradigm Change Operational Art and the Information Joint Function", *JFQ* 89, 2nd Quarter 2018. pp. 8-14.

contemporary war experiences, from World War II to all conflicts since the beginning of the 21st century. At the same time, capabilities, activities and capacities are predominantly focused on information, its collection, dissemination, use in almost all domains and phases of military operation, so it can be concluded that it (information) has a significant integrative role in current and future wars.¹⁰

Taking into account that the media create a public perception that consequently influences political decisions, the media engagement is viewed as a psychological action, i.e. psychological warfare is in the function of conflict. Therefore, the need to find new and active answers is justified, that is, it is necessary to redefine the conceptual and operational approach to psychological warfare in the context of modern, hybrid conflicts.¹¹

From a strategic point of view, communications in conflicts have a multifaceted role. They can be a means by which strategic communicators in conflicts (political, international organizations, NGOs, social movements, the military and terrorist organizations) pursue their interests, influence politics, and at the same time represent the object that political actors exert their influence on. The conditionality of the media and politics has so far been considered from different points of view. These are: "the media omnipotence", according to which communicators are in a subordinate position and have to adapt to the media logic in order to be exposed¹²; "political domination", which emphasizes the importance of the influence of the political elite on the media in war¹³, where, due to the channeling and unavailability of information because of insecurity, many reports are based on the statements of political officials¹⁴; "political-media dependence", where the independence of the media from political influence and the strategic potential of communicators to shape news is conditioned by factors of the context of events, politics and the media (characteristics of conflict events, variations in political environment, professional journalistic routines, characteristics of the media system and cultural variations)¹⁵ and Wolfsfeld's "politics – media – politics" (PMP) cycle, according to which changes

¹⁰ Alexis G. Grynkewich, „Introducing Information as a Joint Function“, *JFQ* 89, 2nd Quarter 2018, pp. 6-7.

¹¹ Dejan M. Vučinić, „Psihološko ratovanje u prostoru društvenih informacionih medija – aspekt hibridnog ratovanja“, *Vojno delo* 7/2017, pp. 326-337.

¹² Christian Baden & Christoph Meyer, „Dissecting media roles in conflict: A transactionist process model of conflict news production, dissemination and influence“. In R. Fröhlich (Ed.), *Media in war and armed conflict. The dynamics of conflict news production and dissemination*, New York: Routledge, 2018, pp. 23-48.

¹³ Michael Brüggemann & Hartmut Weßler, „Medien im Krieg. Das Verhältnis von Medien und Politik im Zeitalter transnationaler Konfliktkommunikation“. In F. Marcinkowski & B. Pfetsch (Eds.), *Politik in der Mediendemokratie*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2009, pp. 635-657.

¹⁴ Edward Herman & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing consent: A propaganda model*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

¹⁵ Peter Miltner & Annie Waldherr, „Themenzyklus der Kriegsberichterstattung – ein Phasenmodell“, *Publizistik*, 58(3), 2013, pp. 267-287.

in the political environment lead to a change in the media performance, which further leads to a change in the political environment.¹⁶ Adopting this Wolfsfeld's PMP model of the impact cycle, Jungblut has developed and confirmed an improved approach through research, which includes aspects of the work of "information controllers" (Gatekeeping).¹⁷

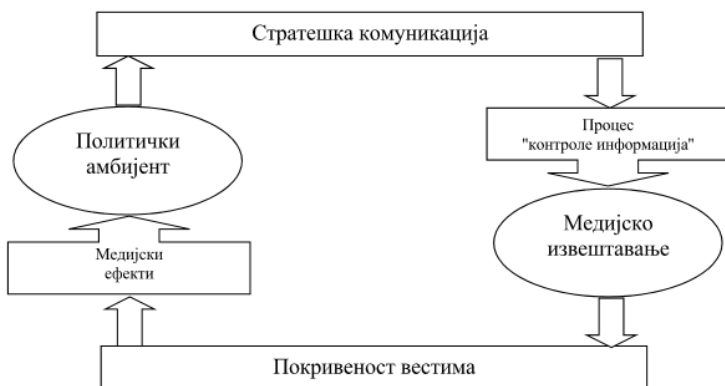


Figure 1 – The cycle of interdependent influence of politics and the media with the developed function of "information controller" (according to: Jungblut, 2019:89)

In his study, Jungblut analyzes, and confirms by results, the correlations between politics and the media from the point of view of strategic communicators in conflicts according to the developed model of influence "politics – media – politics". In addition, the study has identified the pronounced media influence on the preparation of political decisions and the complex function of "the guardian of information".¹⁸ The research has identified political and military organizations as the most influential strategic communicators in the PMP cycle and showed that the influence of strategic communicators depends on the phase of conflict and its duration.¹⁹

¹⁶ Gadi Wolfsfeld, „The politics-media-politics principle: Towards a more comprehensive approach to political communication”, *American Political Science Association*, 2013 Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois.

¹⁷ Marc Jungblut, *Strategic Communication and its Role in Conflict News*, Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2019.

¹⁸ The study examines the war cases and protracted conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo between the UN forces and armed forces, the long genesis of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the post-war relationship and interethnic relations between "the Republic of Kosovo" and Serbia during the Brussels negotiations and the Syrian civil war. (Jungblut, 2019: 101-140)

¹⁹ The research results indicate that political organizations and the military have the greatest absolute influence in all phases of conflict (from outbreak, escalation to negotiations and resolution), and international and terrorist organizations the smallest one. Social movements and NGOs have a moderate impact, with increased action in the conflict resolution phases (Jungblut, 2019: 183-192).

The media have a strong stimulating effect on creating opinions of people, i.e. on creating public opinion. Research indicates that the media in the United States before and during the aggression on the FRY in 1999, predominantly sought to simplify the story to “for and against”, thus creating the explicit public attitude towards the topic. Namely, analyses show that the strongest influence of information control in the cycle “politics – media – politics” (PMP) in this case had the administration of President Clinton (political strategic communicator) and the NATO (military strategic communicator).²⁰ One of the phenomena that enables strong interaction between politics and the media from the point of view of strategic communications in conflicts is the so-called *CNN effect*.

The CNN effect - genesis, content and implementation

The *Cable News Network* (CNN) TV station was founded in 1980, with the idea to be the first cable network to broadcast news and news programme continuously and worldwide. The first significant step on the global stage was made after the „Challenger” disaster, in 1986, when President Reagan’s address and the memorial service for the fallen astronauts were broadcast. However, the key moment for the world debut of the CNN, which also greatly contributed to the establishment of the myth on its effect, was the Gulf War of 1990-1991.²¹ It can be said that this war established the CNN among the world most important reporters, especially from war and crisis areas. This media company has built its reputation by inventive, dynamic and engaged reporting from the very battlefields, directly from the place of military operations or from the centre of crisis hotspots. The reputation and standards that other media companies began to overtake due to the attractiveness and attracting the public attention, was built during the crisis in Somalia, the wars in the former SFRY and the NATO aggression on the FRY. CNN has given viewers with its engaged approach the impression that it is present in all key places and that it has an important role in global politics, as well as being able to influence the decisions of the Western governments regarding foreign policy. This assumed effect is called “the CNN effect”, “the CNN complex”, “the CNN curve” or “the CNN factor”.²² At the same time, the media company itself is not a direct synonym for “the CNN effect”, but the way, organization and production of the media reporting content.²³

²⁰ Miroslav Mitrović, “Mediji kao instrument strateške komunikacije u oružanim konfliktima”, *Zbornik matice srpske za društvene nauke*, 2020 (in print).

²¹ Piers Robinson, *The CNN effect*, London: Routledge, 2002.

²² Simon Hulme, *The Modern Media: The Impact on Foreign Policy*, MA. Kansas: Command and General Staff College, 1996.

²³ Robinson, (2002).

It is clear that in modern times, the prestige and power of a state is not defined by military power, but by the influence of the media.²⁴ The CNN effect is synonymous with active and engaged reporting on events, most often from the immediate scene, i.e. real-time reporting, which has led to direct public awareness of political events²⁵, and consequently forces policymakers to react to them²⁶. Since 1991, this effect has become synonymous with the interaction of politics and the media as an instrument of public pressure in relation to political, particularly foreign policy decisions related to military interventions. Despite the fact that there is no single position on the real power of the media influence on politics, Jungblat's research indicates that there is the interaction of the media influence, and that their result is reflected in the public attitude towards a particular problem. Therefore, there is no absolute influence of the media on politics, but its execution is reflected in the prevailing public attitude, which, despite its strong influence, can be repulsive to some idea that political communicators place through the media.²⁷

Furthermore, no matter how dramatic the topic is, it is not the subject of interest of general or certain public before it appears in the global media discourse, i.e. before "the mobilization of conscience"²⁸ and consequently "telediplomacy", which is a consequence of changing traditional diplomatic relations, in which the media publications and contents have the power to pursue a policy and define diplomatic outcomes.²⁹

²⁴ Shqipe Palloshi, *The Influence of the CNN Effect and the Al Jazeera Effect on American Foreign Policy*, International Balkan University, 2016.

²⁵ Margaret Belknap, *The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk*, U.S. Army War College Strategy Research Project, 2001.

²⁶ James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, 1st edn. Putnam Adult, 1995.

²⁷ Despite the absolute saturation of the media with content that presented Serbs as the greatest evil, against which it is necessary to use all available forces, the US public was not committed to land operation that Clinton's administration intensively promoted. According to *Gallup poll* research, the US public continued to support the US participation in the aggression against the FRY even after the first week of air strikes. In that period, the greatest number of Americans (from 57 to 65%) opposed the engagement of land forces, especially in the case of ineffective air strikes (Holland, 1999). The number of Americans who followed such news dropped from 43% in the last week of March to 32% in mid-May. Moreover, the US public support to the war in the Balkans weakened (from 62% in mid-April to 53% in mid-May), so the bombing continued with narrow public support. In the last week of May 1999, most Americans felt that air strikes should be stopped and that negotiations should begin to avoid an agreement imposed by violence (Morin, 1999). We are witnesses that the agreement was reached in the first half of June, which can be partly indirectly viewed as the influence of the public.

²⁸ Bella Mody, *The Geopolitics of Representation in Foreign News: Explaining Darfu*, Lexington Books, 2010.

²⁹ Ammon Royce, *Global television and the shaping of world politics: CNN, telediplomacy, and foreign policy*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001.

The influence of modern media, i.e. the CNN effect on the public, and thus on political decisions, is carried out through:

– *Acceleration*: the ability of the media to indirectly influence the government decisions by shortening the time for government officials to consider an event and come up with responses to current policy. Namely, current reporting on events requires that answers are given in a relatively short period of time, often without objective knowledge of the problem, thus making a wrong decision.³⁰

– *Prevention*: the ability of the media to undermine public support for an action or policy and thus hinder their implementation (depictions of their fallen soldiers, collateral civilian casualties, etc.). In addition, this effect is used in cases of endangering one's national (operational) security, in order to prevent the publication of data that may threaten one's operations.³¹

– *Topic setting*: the ability of the media by intensively placing a certain topic in the public focus to impose its consideration as dominant and necessary. The other side of this effect is omission, hiding topics, which completely excludes them from the consideration of politics, while the public is not aware that they exist, despite the fact that they can be very dramatic and catastrophic in terms of the number of victims.³²

– *Multiplying power*: the ability of the media to consolidate and strengthen support for government policy by speaking in its favour. Moreover, the political elite can use the media to repel the opponent by increasing its power, directed by the media appearance. The basis of this influence is propaganda, by gaining influence on the national and international public by promoting official government policy. In addition, the propaganda effect plays a major role in maintaining the morale of the internal public, interpreting events in a biased way, often exaggerating the success and virtues of the national side, while increasing the failures and immorality of opponents.³³

– *Challenging*: The effect is most relevant in the context of military interventions and often refers to influencing governments to get involved in „other people's wars“ or in humanitarian crises with active military components. By placing dramatic, emotional and sudden images, framed in a way that is suitable and acceptable to the viewer's eye, the media present one party to a conflict as a victim, and the other as an executioner. In this way, the media present „a challenge“ to their public by claiming that their government and its official policy are ineffective, doing nothing to prevent crime.³⁴

³⁰ Steven Livingston, „Clarifying the CNN effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention“, *Research paper R-18* The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, pp. 2-4.

³¹ Ibid, pp. 4-6.

³² Ibid, pp. 6-10.

³³ Babak Bahador, *The CNN Effect in Action: How the News Media Pushed the West toward War in Kosovo*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.10-11.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 11-12.

The influence of the CNN effect on foreign policy

Until the mid-1990s, scientists who analyzed the influence of the CNN effect on foreign policy, especially the United States, were almost unanimous in their opinion that it had no special significance in foreign policy decisions.³⁵ The attitudes that deny the ability of the influence of the CNN effect on foreign policy are based on: 1) The theory of indexing, according to which the media follow what elites place and they are the instruments of politics;³⁶ 2) The theory of manufacturing conditionality, when elite controls the media through economic power and uses them as support to its policy goals. It is the media that define, select, shape, control and limit the area of political debate, leading to a guided outcome that renders the desired results for powerful elite and misrepresentations of free market of public debate³⁷; 3) The theory of rationalism: the CNN effect can only put crisis on the agenda, but the political decision to intervene is ultimately determined by the perception of the chances for success and the projection of the achievement of state interests.³⁸ However, events on foreign policy scene, the US geopolitical engagement and interventionism in the second half of the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, have led to the development of a deeper and, based on numerous examples, analytical approach, where the capacities of the influence of the CNN effect were unequivocally emphasized³⁹ with defining the interaction of politics – media– (public)–politics.⁴⁰

From the current point of view, the influence of the CNN effect on politics is evident. It is also the fact that in conditions when there is no clearly defined political orientation and position regarding a problem, political issue, with the intense influence of stakeholders for pressure, the CNN effect can accelerate decision-making without detailed analysis of all relevant data and consideration of consequences, which leads to uncontrolled events, conflicts, dysfunctional states and disruption of international order.⁴¹

³⁵ Nik Gowing, *Real-time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions?*, Harvard working paper, Cambridge, MA: The Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, 1994.

³⁶ Jonathan Mermin, *Debating war and peace: Media coverage of U.S. intervention in the post-Vietnam era*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

³⁷ Edward Herman & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edition.Pantheon, 2002.

³⁸ Peter Jakobsen, „National interest, humanitarianism or CNN: What triggers UN peace enforcement after the Cold War?“, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, 1996, pp. 205-215.

³⁹ Robinson, (2002).

⁴⁰ Jungblut, (2019).

⁴¹ The information was repeated on all media platforms that the only solution for “evil Serbs and their aggression in Kosovo” was one of the strategies of the Albanian group for the pressure on the President Clinton’s administration to prepare and implement support to the secession of Kosovo and Metohija from Serbia (Mitrović, 2017)

The Markale case – the CNN effect in action

The analysis of the so-called second massacre at the Markale market in Sarajevo, with strong reverence for the victims of the horrific crime, included events and effects that had the media significance, and within the CNN effect certain political reactions were produced, which led to the US military intervention in conflict.

The crime at the Markale market in Sarajevo is an unprecedented event, in which hundreds of people died in two attacks. The first attack, which took place in 1994, according to the testimony of the UN officers, was organized by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina⁴². The opinion of the UN personnel that conducted an investigation that „the Muslim forces were shooting at themselves” is undivided, and the report of the CNN television, which blamed the Serbian side for the explosion on Markale the same evening, was “propaganda” because at that time the UN did not release the findings of the investigation.⁴³ This appearance of CNN did not provoke the desired reaction, both by political structures and the US public, but it certainly contributed to the creation of stereotypes about “evil Serbs” in public opinion, especially in the West.⁴⁴

The second massacre, which took place in 1995, however, had its results in concrete political actions. The first comments immediately after the event were broadcast live from the scene of the tragedy and influenced the Serbian side to be directly accused of the crime. However, immediately after the tragedy, the UN force command began to receive reports by officers and expert teams from the scene, which indicate that the grenade was not fired from Serb positions.⁴⁵ Moreover, several specialized teams of professional officers, by comparing the calculated parameters of the grenade flight, determined that it was not possible to fire a grenade from the listed locations and there were not any Bosnian Serb weapons or positions on them. An international team of ballistic experts, as well as the UN commissions, processed all the evidence in detail and came to the conclusion that the ratio of the number of victims was disproportionate to the action of a grenade, that there were several explosions that spread straight, that is, they came from the entrance of buildings. In this regard, there were indications that evidence was subsequently placed (mine stabilizer was later placed in crater), that the projectile’s trajectory was such that it would have to hit the roof of the building surrounding the market, and that all indicated that it was the activity of improvised explosive devices, placed probably at several locations.⁴⁶

⁴² Slobodan Vuković, “Ulica Vase Miskina, Markale, Račak: događaji s obaračem”, *Teme*, XXXIII, no. 1, January-March 2009, p. 204.

⁴³ RTV (September 7, 2015). „Granatu na Markale mogle ispaliti obe strane”.

⁴⁴ Vuković, (2009), pp. 205-206.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

⁴⁶ Benjamin Rusek, Charles Ingrao, „The ‘Mortar Massacres’: A Controversy Revisited”, *Nationalities papers*, Vol 32, No.4, December 2004.

The CNN effect in action

In both first and second case of civilian suffering at the Markale market, CNN had the media exclusive. The protagonist of most reports was the correspondent Christian Amanpour. Her commitment to representing the Muslim views and interests has been noticed by the media analysts, who identify her as a strong and declared defender of the media purity of most insurgent, extremist and terrorist movements that are basically of the Islamic origin.⁴⁷ At the time of the first massacre in Markale, which subsequent analyses determined that Serbian forces were not responsible for, Amanpur "was sitting in Belgrade ... but she did not mind saying in the media that it was probably done by Serbs. She could not have known that. She assumed omniscience, which no journalist has."⁴⁸

In the case of the 1995 massacre, the immediate reporter from the scene was also the CNN team, which practically directly broadcast the attack and the subsequent shocking scenes from the scene of the tragedy.⁴⁹ The first comments directly accused Serbs of the crime. Since all media companies broadcast this report, CNN achieved an echo of the broadcast, creating exclusivity with dramatic footage from the tragedy scene.

The genesis of strategic communication

From the point of view of strategic communications, in this case, the Muslim government of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the US presidential administration can be considered in the function of political communicators. The goal of strategic communication was to gain public support for a political decision that would lead to the US military intervention within the NATO, as a form of pressure on Bosnian Serbs.

However, the possibility that the dramatic event was directed in order to gain public support for such a political decision is indicated by many facts. One of the protected witnesses of the Hague Tribunal, who was in the personal security of Alija Izetbegović during the mentioned period, states that he personally attended the planning of the attack organized by the Bosnian Muslim leader, according to the idea of reis-ul-ulema Mustafa Cerić.⁵⁰ The allegations of this and other witnesses from the UN forces confirm that the tragic event was used to escalate the engagement of the NATO forces, under the direct command of the United States, as the pressure on Bosnian Serb forces to join peace talks, which ultimately resulted in the Dayton

⁴⁷ Steven Stotsky, (October 4, 2007), „Amanpour's troubling journalism", *CAMERA*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Jackie Shymanski (August 28, 1995). Shells rip into Sarajevo marketplace, killing more than 35. *CNN*.

⁵⁰ Nikola Joksimović, (February 5, 2018) „Demontaža jedne granate potpuno menja istinu o ratu u Bosni", *Sputnik Srbija*.

Agreement a few months later.⁵¹ Furthermore, the data of several intelligence services indicate that the Markale massacre was just one in a series of propaganda activities of the media in the service of the US administration interests.⁵²

Persistence in the use of scenarios can also be noticed. Namely, the first attack on civilians in the city centre of Sarajevo took place in the bread queue on May 27, 1992, in the early phase of the war. The UN officials and high-ranking military leaders of the Western countries knew that the attack had been carried out by “Muslim city defenders, not Serb occupiers, as a propaganda trick to win the world sympathy and launch military intervention”.⁵³ The fact that the development of strategic communication with the objective of achieving war goals was done studiously is shown by the fact that in June 1992, President Alija Izetbegović signed the contract with the Washington public relations company Ruder Finn, in order to promote the interests of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the US public and exert the stronger US influence in the Balkans, specifically in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus, the “Bosnian Crisis Communication Centre” founded by this company brought many local Bosnian leaders into contact with the Western officials and mass media. Moreover, this public relations company, which is actually engaged in representing interests, lobbying for the needs of its clients, prepared and put topics in the public spotlight, created news and war narratives for the influential US media, such as the New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Wall Street Journal.⁵⁴ The agency was also engaged in providing the UN resolution in support to military intervention in Bosnia for “humanitarian reasons”.⁵⁵

The analysis of strategic communication through the implementation of the CNN effect

Critically reviewing biased media coverage during the wars in the former SFRY and FRY, the authors state: “The successful demonization of Serbs, making them largely responsible for the Yugoslav wars, and as unique and genocidal killers, was one of the great propaganda triumphs of our era. This was done quickly, with such uniformity and uncritical zeal in the main Western media, that disinformation had (and still has, after almost two decades) an impact in the field”.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Vuković, (2009).

⁵² SRNA (2019, December 23). „Markale” , „Srebrenica” , „Trnopolje” – propaganda through media.

⁵³ Leonard Doyle (Saturday August 22, 1992), „Muslims 'slaughter their own people': Bosnia bread queue massacre was propaganda ploy, UN told”, *Independent*.

⁵⁴ Jeffery Klaehn, *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

⁵⁵ Tom O'Sullivan, (Friday 21 August 1992), „Truth is the first casualty in PR offensive”, *Independent*.

⁵⁶ Edward S. Herman, Emily Schwartz Greco, (March 19, 2009), „Serb Demonization as Propaganda Coup”, *Foreign Policy In Focus*.

This concise statement is a description of the impact of the CNN effect as an instrument of strategic communication in the field of propaganda. At the same time, propaganda is viewed as a determinant of strategic communication, whose purpose is to achieve political effects in conflicts of limited scope, i.e. limited destruction, more precisely, hybrid warfare.⁵⁷

Many well-informed analysts of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina are sharp in their criticism of biased reporting and the gullibility of journalists, who broadcast everything that was reported by the Bosnian Muslim leadership and the US administration. The extreme inflation of allegations of Serbian evil and violence, with fictitious “concentration camps”, “rape camps” and similar analogies aimed at identifying Serbs with Nazis and their camps, challenged the former head of the US Intelligence Department in Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel John Sray to say in 1995 that: “the US has not been so pathetically deceived since Robert McNamara has helped with micromanagement and escalation of the Vietnam War ... The fruitful propaganda machine has created popular views on the Bosnian Muslim government. A strange combination of spin doctors including Bosniak-hired public relations companies, media experts and elements inclined to the US State Department, managed to manipulate illusions about further Muslim goals.”⁵⁸

This statement can be considered as a synthesis of general attitude and knowledge of predominantly biased media coverage of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is unequivocally supported by the high-ranking UN representatives, UNPROFOR commanders, NATO and even State Department officials.⁵⁹

That biased anti-Serbian reporting was “good practice” and widely accepted trend (mainstream) then is also represented by the fact that the winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1993 was Roy Gutman, a journalist who gained fame and award for building stereotypes about “evil Serbs” in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. He based his writing about the alleged crimes on the propaganda content of the Muslim and Croat side, without any other evidence. He, like many other journalists, wrote intensively and enthusiastically about events, camps and crimes, although they had never been in the field they wrote about. Thus, they created the CNN effect in the field of setting thesis and directing the public, without insight into the state of affairs.⁶⁰ In addition, an even more devastating effect is that Serbian victims are completely marginalized, left out and not mentioned. When it is not possible to avoid them in reports, they are presented as a justified and necessary “price” that has to be paid for everything that Serbs have done to Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

From the point of view of the political interests of the President Clinton administration, it is necessary to consider the time in which the entire considered

⁵⁷ Miroslav Mitrović, „Genesis of propaganda as a strategic means of hybrid warfare concept”, *Vojno delo* 1/2018, pp. 34-49.

⁵⁸ Herman and Greco (2009).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

case took place. The phases of the US participation in Bosnia included the period of William (Bill) Clinton's two presidential terms of office. In the first phase, the administration acted indecisive and reserved, taking a position that coincided with the dominant commitment of the US public that the conflict in the Western Balkans is primarily a European problem. This attitude resulted in low public support for any direct interference, i.e. there was no support for the US military intervention in the first months of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the change in public opinion begins to change linearly, primarily owing to the CNN effect. It can be said that this effect and the media commitment to the Bosnian war were direct factors influencing public attitude towards the conflict itself. More specifically, public opinion in favour of or against the US intervention has resulted from the visibility of war scenes presented through the media.⁶¹

President Clinton and other members of the administration raised tensions and went hand in hand with the published pictures by outbursts of indignation and moral disgust over the "Serb crimes" in the media, thus agreeing with general opinion and approval of the public. President Clinton and his Cabinet are thought to be somewhat obsessed with opinion polls throughout the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the fact that the conflict happened during the 1996 presidential elections. Namely, Clinton wanted to strengthen his presidential candidacy by his appearances as a strong supreme commander. Therefore, the intervention during the war in Bosnia was characterized by the perception of the US public, which motivated President Clinton's actions in two ways: moral, to end violence and ethnic cleansing, and political, to win another presidential term of office.⁶²

The effects of strategic communication through the implementation of the CNN effect

The effects of strategic communication do not only imply direct political and military consequences for the party that is the object of action. Namely, there is a whole spectrum of indirect and very long-term effects that greatly affect the victim of strategic communication. Some of the long-term consequences of creating a negative image and reputation in international relations related to a specific example are:

– creating public opinion on the basis of a stereotype that is "fed" by unverified and one-sided information, according to which there is a clear division into "good and bad guys", that is, "good = all non-Serbs" and "evil = Serbs". The public has been systematically flooded with dramatic content and narratives that describe Serbs in an extremely negative context;

⁶¹ Ciara Watson, "Taking the Temperature of Public Opinion: U.S. Intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Conference Addressing Diplomatic, Economic, and Migration Challenges in Southeastern Europe, James Madison University Florence, April 23-27, 2018.

⁶² Ibid.

– launching a political campaign to achieve military and geopolitical goals through the active operational participation of its own and allied armed forces within the NATO, based on international interests and interests of groups for pressure. The campaign has been supported by the previously created public attitude and represents the embodiment of the expression “the will of the people”, which puts it in a situation that military intervention is viewed not only as necessary, but a required means to stop “Serbian evil”. In this situation, the political and military elite practically “only fulfill the will of the people”, so they must not resist it;

– establishing a lasting paradigm of interpretation based on the lack of truth and verified information. Namely, the established stereotypical matrix about unconditional crimes of Serbs becomes quoted and cited in papers of experts and scientists. Critical reviews, although not rare, are generally silent, i.e. not exposed, probably because they are not within the mainstream of the promoted idea. This quasi-scientific approach, which does not objectify knowledge, becomes dangerous in the long run because it creates a basis for further foundations of unfounded and irrational moves, which leads to long-term political consequences;

– establishing the basis for other similar actions, which in this case happened in the subsequent aggression against the FRY, within the framework of the NATO intervention in support of secessionist forces in Kosovo and Metohija. Namely, the public opinion in the United States and most Western countries has already been prepared that Serbs have been declared “villains” and guilty of other people’s suffering, so that, with the additional influence of the CNN effect, which has been triggered by the “massacre” in Račak, has easily supported the initiative of the Clinton administration to engage the US Armed Forces as the backbone of the NATO in the aggression against the FRY.

In general, the opinion of objective media analysts is that most newspaper reports on the dissolution of Yugoslavia belong to oversimplified narratives that do not reflect the full complexity of the conflict. Most media reports narrow the coverage of these multilateral civil wars by assigning the invariable role of victim to one side (non-Serbs), while the role of perpetrator (“executioner, criminal, mutilator”) is usually assigned to the other (Serbs), ignoring the complexity of the surroundings, prehistory, the concept and concrete hidden details of the conflict, which have changed dynamically.⁶³

Conclusion

With their complexity, multidisciplinary and the importance of influencing modern life, strategic communications are science as much as art. Their structure represents the fields of development and action of psychological, sociological and technological aspects of modern communications.

Politics, the media and their influence on the public, as a generator of attitude towards politics, are supported and represent the basis for initiating political relations

⁶³ Martin Yonias Marinos, *Disciplining Civil War: Serbian and U.S. Press Coverage of the 1990s Conflicts in Yugoslavia*. *Global Media Journal*. 2008, Vol.7, Issue 12.

related to military interventions. Important factors in this cycle are information controllers, reactions and public opinion. The cycle politics – media – public – politics is led by strategic communicators, who in armed conflicts, closer to military intervention, lead strategic communication through that cycle. The dominant strategic communicators in armed interventions are political and military entities.

War and the media are intertwined and conditioned in contemporary conflicts; their correlations are an expression of strategic communication of subjects who pursue their interests in conflict. One of the expressions of the correlation politics – media – politics is the so-called CNN effect. It was established as a form of the media development in accordance with the evolution of conflict, practically during the first war after the Cold War, as a part of the Operation Desert Storm. During the 1990s, it evolved and is a reflection of the dynamic correlation of strategic communication subjects in conflicts. It is also a synthesis of the influence of several different media in different domains on the engagement of subjects in relation to achieving goals of operation, intervention or war as a whole. It is recognized for its great potential to emphasize topic, raise tensions, single out and differentiate actors, as well as mobilize the public to support intervention. The mentioned examples, which describe some key moments during the wars in the SFRY during the 1990s, show that the CNN effect had a significant mobilizing effect on the public in the United States and Western countries to turn against one party in the conflict. At the same time, the CNN effect was the sublimation of “the lighthouse effect” in which only one side of the event was included, without respecting the views and statements of the other side. Thus, this effect can be included in the instrument of managing political will through the influence of the media on the public within the conflict in the former SFRY during the 1990s.

The consequences of the CNN effect are far-reaching and deep, in terms of geopolitics, strategic vectors, cultural and ideological orientation, identity and socio-psychological sense of all nations in the area that was under its influence.

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Медији као инструмент стратешке комуникације у оружаним сукобима – Си-Ен-Ен ефекат

Медији, политика и јавно мњење су међусобно условљене друштвене категорије. Њихова међузависност је нарочито наглашена у оружаним сукобима, посебно у контексту оружаних интервенција. Форум интеракције наведених феномена је уоквирен парадигмом стратешке комуникације, која се, кроз деловање ентитета идентификованих као стратешки комуникатори, преноси на јавност ради остваривања мотивишућег ефекта за реакције које су у складу са интересима комуникатора. Један од појавних облика примене стратешке комуникације у свим њеним формама и садржајима је Си-Ен-Ен ефекат. У овом раду Си-Ен-Ен ефекат се одређује као шири појам од саме телевизијске станице по којој је добио назив. Такође, рад анализира однос политике, медија и јавности у функцији остваривања подршке јавног мњења за војну интервенцију. Поред тога, Си-Ен-Ен ефекат се анализира у функцији стратешке комуникације, на примеру медијске употребе крвопролића на пијаци Маркале у рату у Босни и Херцеговини 1995. године, као и деловања и ефеката на јавност САД ради подршке идеји војне интервенције.

Кључне речи: *стратешке комуникације, оружана интервенција, јавно мњење, Си-Ен-Ен ефекат, Маркале*