



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Master's Thesis 2024 30 ECTS

Faculty of Landscape and Society, Noragric

Children in War and the Role of Media: A Comparative Study on Media Framing of Children in War in Scandinavia and the Balkans

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MSc Global Development Studies

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Declaration

I, Ylva Elvevold Randgaard, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Darley Jose Kjosavik, for her support, comments and positive feedback throughout the completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank Elisabeth Molteberg, for taking her time to answer my questions about CDA and providing me with literature, despite having any obligations.

I am very grateful to Inger Skjelsbæk. Her knowledge, feedback and support played an important role in the shaping of this thesis. Without her contributions, this thesis would not have reached its current form. I appreciate the time you have dedicated to this. Thank you.

Thank you to my dear family. Mom, for always providing support, while always being able to ask the right question, see broader contexts and encourage me. Dad, with your knowledge that enables you to provide insightful advice on language and content. My whole family, for always supporting me. Thank you.

To Filip Jolevski, for spending countless hours on discussions, translations, and for always supporting me and reminding me of the things I am good at. My love, thank you for your constant encouragement and motivation.

Lastly, I would like to thank my study partner through the past six years, and dear friend Vilde Langaas Wegner. Thank you for your constant reminders that everything will work out, your wise feedback, and always listening. Thank you.

Abstract

This study examines media portrayals of children in war. The aim is to analyse how children of Scandinavian parents who travelled to fight for ISIS and children during and after the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina are portrayed in news articles. Moreover, the thesis investigates potential commonalities and differences in the portrayals. Through a critical discourse analysis, 89 news articles have been analysed. I identified ten discourses surrounding children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters, which includes; 'disclaimer of liability', 'security concerns over radicalization risk', 'prolonged stay increases radicalization risk', 'the children should not be punished for their parent's choices', 'bring the children home', 'exploiting children as entry tickets: concerns over family reunification', 'the vulnerable and traumatised child', 'the innocent victim of war', 'upon arrival: the children need support and strong networks' and 'prioritising the most vulnerable: advocating for the repatriation of orphaned children'. The discourses identified in the analysis of children affected by the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, are; 'victimisation of children' 'shattered childhoods: heartbreaking stories of the war's youngest victims', 'innocent victims', 'justice and accountability', 'children at the frontlines in the war', 'young heroes amidst conflict', 'memory and commemoration', 'the psychological toll on the children', 'children born of war' and 'political undertones'. The analysis revealed differences and commonalities in the portrayals. The most prominent difference was the distinction between how children are perceived as 'security threats' and 'innocent victims', where children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters often are highlighted as potential security threats, and children affected by the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina are seen as innocent victims. Commonalities can be seen in narratives emphasising the hardships children in conflict endure, as well as political narratives.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Article one in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, defines a child as individuals under the age of eighteen years (CRC, 1989). Conflict makes children particularly vulnerable and children living in conflict zones continue to suffer grave violations to their rights. In 2021, as many as one out of six children globally lived in a conflict zone, and a total of 24,515 grave violations against children were verified during the same period (Stømme et al, 2022:4). These violations, as defined by the UN security council include; killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups, abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access and rape or other sexual violence against children (Strømme, et al, 2022:11). It would be worthwhile examining how these consequences of war on children are portrayed in media. What stories are told, and which narratives are prominent?

1.1 Research Question & Objective

The thesis seeks to analyse potential commonalities and differences in the media portrayal of children in war. News articles from the Balkans, of children who lived during and after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-95), will be compared with Scandinavian news articles that discuss children born to Scandinavian parents who travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS (2011-to date). The former includes regional and local newspapers, while the latter entails newspapers from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The thesis objective then is to;

Identify commonalities and differences in the portrayal of children whose parents fought for ISIS, as well as children during and after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in news articles from Scandinavia and the Balkans.

To identify commonalities and differences in these two cases the thesis seeks to answer the following research question;

Are there commonalities and differences in how children in war are portrayed in Scandinavian and Balkan media?

To answer the main-research question the thesis aims to answer the sub-research questions;

(1) How are children in war portrayed in Balkan and Scandinavian news articles?

(2) What narratives can support commonalities and differences in the portrayals?

1.2 Why is it Important to Ask These Questions?

The conflict in Syria and Iraq and Bosnia & Herzegovina are notably different. They occurred decades apart, in different geographical locations, and have distinctly different historical and political backgrounds. Moreover, the Scandinavian children in Syria and Iraq are located outside of Scandinavia due to their parents' involvement in a foreign conflict. In contrast, children in Bosnia & Herzegovina were living in a local war. This highlights a key distinction; the Scandinavian children in Syria and Iraq are displaced from their home countries due to their parents' involvement in a foreign conflict, while children in Bosnia & Herzegovina experienced the conflict within their own country. Why then conduct a comparative study on the two cases? Despite the apparent differences, comparing the portrayals of these children in news articles can offer a rich ground for critical discourse analysis.

I chose these two cases for several reasons. Both cases have received a significant amount of media coverage. The repatriation of children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters has remained a present topic in Scandinavian news articles and the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina received extensive media coverage (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005:191), drawing attention to the humanitarian impact. I am seeking to analyse the commonalities and differences in the portrayals. Because these cases are so different, any commonalities that might emerge from the analysis can provide insight into a broader potential trend in how children in war are portrayed. Hence, offering insight into how children in conflict are depicted regardless of the vastly different circumstances. Moreover, differences might shed light on underlying biases, assumptions and political agendas that form the media narratives. For instance, are Scandinavian children associated with ISIS seen more through a security threat lens compared to the humanitarian perspective often applied to children affected by the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina?

Another reason is contextual and language insight. I chose Bosnia & Herzegovina because of my knowledge of the conflict and the region, having lived in Sarajevo and possessing connections that can assist in translating local articles. Utilising local news articles can offer a more nuanced perspective than solely relying on English-written articles. Additionally, I focused on Scandinavian media and the portrayal of children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters because I am fluent in Scandinavian languages and have a good understanding of the political context. This contextual and linguistic insight is crucial for conducting a critical discourse analysis, which relies on the use of language in broader contexts.

The analysis does not aim to offer a comprehensive picture of all types and roles of media representation of children in war, but rather seek to identify broader discourses that can offer insight into the differences and commonalities observed in the two cases. Both groups of children are ultimately victims of circumstances beyond their control, yet the framing in news articles can significantly alter their perceived identity and the level of compassion they receive from the public. By analysing commonalities and differences in the portrayal of Scandinavian children whose parents left to fight for ISIS and children who experienced the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, the research efforts can shed light on the narratives that are prominent in the two cases. This, in turn, encourages the reader to reflect on the narratives we endure in everyday news - bearing in mind that media coverage of children should equally recognize the humanity and needs of all children affected by conflict, regardless of their background.

1.3 Thesis Structure

In *Chapter two* I will present background information and literature review about ISIS and children affected by ISIS affiliation, and the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina and children during the civil war. *Chapter three* offers the theoretical framework of the thesis, addressing definitions of language, discourse, power / knowledge and critical discourse analysis. In *chapter four* I present the Methodological framework of the thesis. Including, data collection, sampling, the process and limitations. *Chapter five* is dedicated to the analysis. The chapter presents and discusses the discourses that were identified through the analysis of news articles. *Chapter six* offers a discussion on the commonalities and differences that were identified through the analysis.

Chapter II: Background and Literature Review

This chapter aims to provide background information and literature review on the key topics; ISIS, and children affected by ISIS affiliation, the civil war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, and children within this context. The chapter begins with an overview of ISIS, children within the caliphate and a literature review on debates surrounding children affected by ISIS affiliation. The chapter then provides background information on the war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, and about children during the war followed by a review of literature on the effects of war on children in general.

2.1 ISIS

The Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (hereafter; ISIS), is a Salafi Jihadist militant group that adheres to a fundamentalist Wahhabi interpretation of Sunni Islam (Barash & Webel, 2018: 101). The group's primary objective has, since 2004, been to establish a caliphate; a Sunni Islamic state governed by religious authorities under a singular leader, the caliph (Barash & Webel, 2018: 101). ISIS traces its origins to 1999 when it pledged its allegiance to al-Qaeda and later became involved in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In 2011, with the onset of the Syrian Civil War, ISIS expanded its operations to Syria (Barash & Webel, 2018: 101). The rise of ISIS gained major international focus in 2014 (Jones, 2018:375). From their stronghold in Raqqa in Syria, ISIS-fighters advanced along the river valleys Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq before reaching and seizing Mosul (Jones, 2018:375). After taking over the second-largest city in Iraq, the ISIS-leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared a new caliphate at Mosul's Great Mosque, reinstating an Islamic authority that had been defunct since 1924 (Jones, 2018:375). In Syria, ISIS engaged in aggressive ground assaults against both government forces and various rebel factions, further solidifying its influence and control in the region (Barash & Webel, 2018: 102). Early in 2016, ISIS had established control over extensive territory in Iraq and Syria, where the group imposed its strict interpretation of sharia law (Barash & Webel, 2018: 102). Embracing an extremist view of Islam, ISIS advocates for religious violence and labels Muslims who disagree with its beliefs as infidels or apostates.

The group's objective is to revert to the early days of Islam, rejecting any religious innovations in pursuit of what it deems "pure Islam" (Barash & Webel, 2018: 103). The means used by ISIS include, slaughter of unarmed enemies, targeting individuals outside their interpretation

of Islam, as well as practices such as beheadings, crucifixions, and sexual enslavement of women. Despite its purported mission to purify Islam through rejection of religious innovations, ISIS paradoxically shared videos glorifying its conquests and atrocities through various online platforms (Jones, 2018:375). The distribution of videos showcasing ISIS's activities has significantly contributed to the group's visibility. These videos, often shared through social media and other online platforms, serve as propaganda tools to both attract new recruits and spread fear. Recruitment of foreign fighters by ISIS became a global problem (Benmelech & Klor, 2018:1), as the group drew recruits from nations across the world. The total number of ISIS-fighters were, according to the CIA, estimated to 31.000, whereas two thirds were foreign fighters (Barash & Webel, 2018: 102). There were around 300 individuals travelling from Sweden to fight for ISIS (Nilsson & Esholdt, 2022:1), PST (Norwegian Police Security Service) estimated that around 100 persons travelled from Norway (FN-Sambandet, 2023), and at least 150 Danish citizens travelled from Denmark (Hassan, 2019:13). Some of the foreign fighters both brought their children to the conflict zone, and many had children while they were affiliated with ISIS, as well as after ISIS's loss of territorial stronghold.

2.1.1 Children in the ISIS Regime

Children usually became associated with ISIS through one of three ways; abduction or forced conscription, voluntary enlistment, or being born into the group (Capone, 2019:76). Contrary to many other terrorist organisations ISIS involved families, particularly children in a systematic manner. Fighters were encouraged to train their children through 'ashbal' (or; the lions club) (Capone, 2019:76). The goal of the training was to create a 'new generation' of jihadists, and strong evidence indicates that indoctrination started at the age of six, and weapons-training at age nine (Capone, 2019:76). Multiple videos of children engaged in war crimes and other gruesome activities have been spread across online platforms. For example, in 2016 a video of, among others, four-year old Isa Dare was released by ISIS. In the video the young boy presses the button on a device, which is followed by the explosion of a vehicle killing three Syrian men, that allegedly was spies for British Intelligence Services. The boy later stood by the remains of the vehicle, shouting "Allahu Akbar" (Brooks et al., 2022:107-108). Later in 2016, another video of five young boys, seemingly between the ages of ten and thirteen was released. The video shows the boys in military attire with weapons shouting "Allahu Akbar" before executing Kurdish captives (Brooks et al., 2022:108).

The children growing up in these extreme circumstances were often exposed to airstrikes, bombings, as well as other forms of violence (Almohammad, 2018:5). Many of the children experienced death, including that of family members (Almohammad, 2018:5). Evidence of radical indoctrination and weapons training of young children, combined with videos circulated online of children committing atrocities, led to a widespread fear that these children could pose a security threat to their respective countries.

2.1.2 Repatriation of Children Affected by ISIS Affiliation

When ISIS lost its remaining military stronghold to Syrian Forces in the battle of Baghuz Fawqani in 2019, thousands of ISIS followers still remained (Lucquerna, 2020:150). These followers and their underage children were sent to Kurdish-controlled detention camps in northern Syria, approximately 200 were Nordic citizens (Koegeler-Abdi, 2024:233). When the Nordic citizens and their children were sent to detention camps it sparked a debate of whether to, and if so, how to help them. Moreover, if the Scandinavian governments had any responsibilities regarding assisting these children.

Koegler-Abdi (2024) examines why Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish politicians acknowledge the terrible circumstances of interned children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters in detention camps as a humanitarian emergency, yet fail to take action. Koegler-Abdi argued that this inaction is not only due to fears of terrorism and security concerns, but that it is also tied to a specific discursive practice of liminal childhood (Koegler-Abdi, 2024:234). She argues that this discursive practice of liminal children is tied to the children being perceived as “dangerous children in danger” (Koegler-Abdi, 2024:249). This notion complicates the children's practical access to their rights. Through a discursive analysis of children born to Scandinavian foreign fighters and children born as a result of relations with German soldiers during World War II Koegeler-Abdi, seeks to offer a historical perspective to the ongoing controversies about assisting Scandinavian children in detention camps in Syria and Iraq. It is argued that while children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters are acknowledged as Scandinavian citizens, they are not treated accordingly. These children are rather left in a state of uncertainty, neither explicitly banned from returning, nor having their status decided (Koegeler-Abdi, 2024:235).

Even though the loss of ISIS strongholds in 2019 sparked the debate of how to handle the children of foreign fighters, reports that foreign fighters and their families were planning to return, emerged as early as 2016 (McDonald & Smith, 2019:224). McDonald & Smith (2019)

conducted a critical discourse analysis of public debates on the return of the children of Australian foreign fighters to ISIS and their children, with reference to how this affected educational inclusion for these children. For the purpose of the thesis, I will solely elaborate their findings on the public opinions. MacDonald & Smith (2019), presents that public debates surrounding these children places considerable attention on the perceived risks returning foreign fighters from ISIS might pose, including their children. Moreover, despite them being recognized as children, concerns about potential security threats overshadow efforts in assisting their reintegration (MacDonald & Smith, 2019:224). They emphasise that the way language was used about children of returning foreign fighters in debates was troubling. Moreover, that the rights of these children were “...obscured by a deeply entrenched discourse of fear” (McDonald & Smith, 2019:224-225).

Athie (2018) discusses how the return and reintegration of children of foreign fighters are perceived as conflicting with national security agendas and efforts of counterterrorism. Moreover, these children are often perceived as possible security threats and ‘ticking time-bombs’ (Athie, 2018). Athie (2018) argues that since the return of these children is intertwined with a discussion of national security, it leaves the children in former ISIS-controlled areas, with limited access to necessities and uncertain futures. Moreover, the “...reality is that these children are victims of serious human rights violations” (Athie, 2018). She argues that despite an ongoing conflict between the protection of children and prioritising national security, inaction through leaving the children's future uncertain is the worst possible scenario (Athie, 2018).

2.2 Bosnia & Herzegovina: Background, Civil War and The Dayton Agreement

The former Yugoslavia (Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; Hereafter SFRJ) is a region with a long history of different nationalities and ethnicities coexisting. At times this coexistence has been characterised by unrest and conflicts. Because the divisions between the ethnic groups, as one factor to the gruesome civil war in Bosnia & Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina*; hereafter BiH), has roots that stretches far back in time, it can be hard to know where to start when explaining the background for the conflict that took place in 1992-1995. However, inspired by the approach of Kalyvas & Sambanis (2005:192), I will start with the death of President Josip Broz Tito in 1980. Tito was the president in SFRY, and when he died, a collective presidency, rotating between the leaders of the six Yugoslavian republics as well as

two autonomous regions took over the power (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005:192). Tito had suppressed ethnic voices, and his death marked the beginning of an increase in nationalist sentiments under the new regime (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005:192). One such sentiment was, for example, that Serb nationalist began to point out the threat Albanians posed in the symbolically important region of Kosovo, while accusing disagreements from Croats of being the recurrence of Ustaše fascism (Kaufman, 2018:389). Slobodan Milošević, continued this nationalist sentiment by suppressing Albanians by dissolving the Kosovo assembly (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005:192) and promoting the desire for Serbian control over Yugoslavia (Kaufman, 2018:389). This led to growing nationalism among Slovenia, BiH and Croatia, where Croatia began to use symbols last used by the Ustaše fascists (Kaufman, 2018:389). For context, the Ustaše fascists operated during the second world war, together with the Nazis. Hitler encouraged the Ustaše leader Ante Pavelić to be especially harsh towards the Serbs, resulting in the group persecuting and punishing Serbs in concentration camps (Hoare, 2014:210). When these symbols were used by Croats again, it gave further power to Milošević's nationalist appeals. In 1991 Slovenia declared its independence, followed by Croatia which resulted in a conflict where the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) defeated Croatian areas with Serb inhabitants (Kaufman, 2018:389). Bosniak fear of Serbian dominance led to Bosniak and Croat leaders to declare Bosnia's independence (Kaufman, 2018:389). The independence was decided through voting in March 1992, which the Serbs boycotted (Tepšić & Džuverović, 2018:29). Soon after the voting unrest began, and Serbs started to set up roadblock around in cities (Kalyvas & Sambanis, 2005:192). As the region called Bosnia under Yugoslavia was inhabited by Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats - the region was divided by three ethnic groups who all had their own goals; Bosniaks wanting independence, Croats wanting areas they considered theirs (western Herzegovina) and Serbs wanting to remain in Yugoslavia (Kaufman, 2018:389).

In April 1992 the Bosnian civil war broke out, lasting until December 1995 (Tepšić & Džuverović, 2018:29). Bosnia quickly became the most violent battlefield of the wars in Balkan (Jones, 2017:435), marked by mass killings, forced displacement, massacres and mass rape (Banović et al, 2021:6). The three ethnic groups all sought control over the same territory, to protect their own interests. By this time, the president of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, and the Serbian president, Slobodan Milošević had agreed on how to divide the territory (Banović et al, 2021:3). Shortly after Bosnia declared its independence Serb paramilitary forces initiated a siege and bombardment of Sarajevo, killing thousands of civilians and destroying cultural sites

(Jones, 2017:435). At the same time, attacks were happening in other places, especially in the east where Bosniaks were in landlocked territory and frequently got overpowered by Serb forces (Jones, 2017:237). Concentration camps were established throughout the country. The camps were used to brutally torture and humiliate its prisoners (Karčić, 2022:5). Men were often separated from the women and children, who were kept together in separate camps. The men were, beaten, tortured, sexually abused, and starved, women and girls were raped and sexually abused (Karčić, 2022:5). There were public executions and children were often threatened in front of their parents or family members (Karčić, 2022:5). Sexual violence was widespread in the conflict, and it is estimated that somewhere between 10.000 to 60.000 women were raped, across different ethnic groups (Skjelsbæk, 2006:94). On 6th of July 1995 around 8000 Bosniak men and boys were massacred in Srebrenica, which has been recognized as a genocide by ICJ (International Criminal Court of Justice) and ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) (Hoare, 2014:215).

On the 14th of December 1995 the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed, and the war ended (Banović et al, 2021:3). Under the motto “one State, two Entities and three Nations” (Banović et al, 2021:4), BiH was divided into two entities and one district. The two entities are the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has a majority of Bosniaks and Croats, controlling 51% of the territory and Republika Srpska, with a Serb majority controlling 49% of the territory (Korkut & Mulalić, 2012:110). Additionally, the District Brčko, was established and works as a self-governing unit (Banović et al, 2021:3). DPA did not only end the war in BiH, it also established a complex political system, with fourteen governmental levels including the state, the two entities, ten cantons and the municipal level (Korkut & Mulalić, 2012:111). At the state level there are three elected presidents, one Serb, one Bosniak and one Croat, who take turns in being The Chair of Presidency every eight months, however, all decisions need to be agreed upon. Republika Srpska also has one elected president (Petrović, 2021:114). Additionally, there is The Office of the High Representative (OHR). The OHR oversees the implementation of the DPA and coordinates international activity, on behalf of the international community (Petrović, 2021:114). Moreover, the OHR has Bonn Powers, which includes the right to law enforcement and removal of public officials (Banović et al, 2021:4). Without undermining the DPA’s ability to end the conflict, the effects that are still seen in the political system as well as ethnic division in the country has contributed to the DPA being an object to critical scholarship (Pinkerton, 2016:549). The DPA, divides the three ethnic groups in the political system - this serves its purpose through making sure that all the national

interests are taken into account in decision-making. However, it also challenges the ability to balance ethnic-national interests with the development of a unified national identity (Petrović, 2021:117) This highlights the continuous segregation between the ethnic groups in BiH.

2.2.1 Children During the War in Bosnia & Herzegovina

The war in BiH, had immense consequences for civilians, including children. The majority of children living in BiH during the war experienced separations, loss of something; such as family, close ones, homes and belongings, near contact with war and combat actions, and acute deprivation (Goldstein et al., 1997). Families had to live in basements, to seek shelter from artillery and snipers (Smith et al. 2002:148). Zoghlof, et al, (2021), explores the diaries of two children who lived in Sarajevo during the war; *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Wartime Sarajevo* and *My Childhood under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary*. In the article the content of the diaries describing how it is to live as a child during the war in BiH is elaborated on. In Zlata's diary it is written;

“The ‘kids’ really are playing, which is why us kids are not playing, we are living in fear, we are suffering, we are not enjoying the sun and flowers, we are not enjoying our childhood. WE ARE CRYING” (Filipovic, Z. in Zoghlof, et al., 2021:9).

In another fraction of her diary, she has written in capital letters; “SLAUGHTER! MASSACRE! HORROR! CRIME! BLOOD! SCREAMS! TEARS! DESPAIR!” (Filipovic, Z. in Zoghlof, et al., 2021:11), further illustrating how the war affected young minds in the horrors of war. In Nadia's diary she has written;

“In the darkness, images of bloody, dead children revolve in front of my eyes. One image after another forces itself upon me. I feel such pain and humiliation that I cry and cry” (Halilbegovich, N. in Zoghlof, et al., 2021:15).

These diaries give the reader a glimpse into these children's minds and the hardships they faced during the war in BiH.

Studies on the psychological consequences in children that experienced the war have also been conducted, which can further give insight into how the war in BiH affected children. Hasanović (2011), write about these psychological consequences. She argues that the findings show that there might be long-term psychological problems amongst children who were forced to leave their homes and in the children who lost family members, and close ones (Hasanović, 2011:62). She describes that the most difficult war trauma was seen in children surviving Srebrenica and

Sarajevo (Hasanović, 2011:62). The psychological consequences manifesting in the children includes, "...PTSD, depression, suicidal thoughts, somatic and behavioural problems..." (Hasanović, 2011:62). She further highlights that the treatment of war-traumatised children was scarce, especially in BiH (Hasanović, 2011:62). Smith et al. (2002), conducted a study on the levels of posttraumatic stress reactions, depression and anxiety reactions, and grief among children who experienced the war in BiH. Smith et al. found that children who had experienced two years of war, reported a huge amount of exposure to wartime occurrences, and that the levels of PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) were high (2002:153).

2.3 Children in War

Netland (1997) conducted a study on the psychological reactions in children fleeing from the war in BiH to Norway. In this context she describes the hardships faced by children in war and exile in general. These are presented in five broad categories. First, she discusses exposure to 'political violence', defined as physical and psychological violence carried out by a political or national group with the intent to undermine another group's status or goals (Netland, 1997:54). Children can experience this violence directly, through attacks on themselves or family members, or as witnesses. The violence can include injury, arrest, rape, murder, threats, and other forms, with consequences such as deprivation, the need to seek shelter, or fleeing. Children might also commit violence themselves (Netland, 1997:54-55). Secondly, she describes 'loss and separation'. This refers to losses brought on by forced geographic displacement or because of destruction and death. They may have been separated from people they were close to or their belongings. This can also refer to psychological losses like deteriorated mental health (Netland, 1997:55-56). Thirdly, she presents 'constant change in life circumstances'. This involved dramatic disruptions in life continuity due to, for example, loss of family members, friends as well as frequent relocations and changes (Netland, 1997:56). The fourth aspect is the 'demand for adaptation'. This is particularly relevant for children who are forced to flee, as they often experience the need to adapt to a new society (Netland, 1997:56). Lastly, Netland highlights the 'uncertainty about the future', referring to the fact that many children develop a changed perspective on the future, carrying uncertainty about what it might bring (1997:56).

Werner (2012) addresses the development and mental health of children in war. Werner highlights that findings suggest that younger children might react to being separated from their caregivers with more severe symptoms of distress, whereas older children might be more traumatised due to higher exposure to violence and a higher awareness of the negative impacts of conflict (Werner, 2012:553). Moreover, the most commonly reported consequence on mental health, for children exposed to war is PTSD. A review of “...17 studies of 7,920 children (ages 5–17 years), exposed to wars in Bosnia, Cambodia, Central America, the Middle East, and Rwanda reported PTSD as the primary outcome, with an overall pooled estimate of 47%” (Werner, 2012:554). Werner also discusses protective factors that help reduce the impact of war-related adversities. These include close and strong bonds with a primary caregiver, support from additional caregivers like grandparents or siblings, community support from others facing similar challenges, a shared sense of value through religion or a sense of responsibility for helping others, and having control over their own life, often using humour and kindness to cope (Werner, 2012:555).

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

To analyse the commonalities and differences in the portrayal of children in war in news articles from Scandinavia and Balkan, critical discourse analysis emerged as a valuable theory and method to uncover the discourses in the media narratives. In this chapter, I will explore the concept of discourse analysis, define terms such as language, discourse, and power, and dwell into critical discourse analysis, including Fairclough's theoretical framework and his three-dimensional model. This will establish the theoretical framework for the thesis.

3.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (hereafter; DA) is a method to analyse language (Bryman et al, 2021:484). The foundation of DA is the assertion that our understanding of reality is always mediated through language (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:8). To elaborate further, language does not merely reflect reality; it actively shapes it. It does not deny the existence of reality, but rather suggests that phenomenon's such as meanings, representations, and physical objects gain their significance through discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:9). This notion finds its origin in the structural and post-structuralist linguistics that emerged after Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas regarding language at the beginning of the 20th century. Saussure argued that language is structured within a single system of meaning. This understanding of language was challenged by poststructuralist theory, asserting that language "...is a series of systems or discourses, whereby meanings change from discourse to discourse" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:12).

The definition of *language* within the context of the thesis will align with post-structuralist theory, because it argues that language is not fixed in *one* system, but rather many systems that vary from one discourse to another. By looking at language as fluid by nature it allows for a more nuanced understanding of how language operates within social contexts, because it acknowledges that language has different meanings in different discourses and that these discourses either are maintained or changed through language use (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:12). When studying media portrayal of children in conflict across different regions and time periods, understanding that language can carry different meanings in various contexts can allow for a more nuanced analysis of the discourses surrounding them. A discourse is the term the philosopher Michel Foucault used to illustrate 'patterns' or 'systems' of language.

Discourse in this thesis will be defined according to Foucault's and Fairclough's interpretation. Foucault and Fairclough, share similarities in their way to describe discourse; but differ in their approach to analysis of discourse. The thesis will draw on Fairclough's approach to analysis; which will be presented in 3.2.1. First, I will elaborate on the definition. Discourse is these 'systems' or 'patterns' of language-use that relate to an 'entity', shaping our understanding of it. This understanding of the entity through discourse comes to constitute the entity itself (Bryman et al, 2021:484). In other words, the way we use language to describe something, does not only reflect the reality of it, but also shapes our understanding of it – creating its reality. By recognising discourses in the media portrayal of children in war across Scandinavia and the Balkans, it can uncover underlying narratives and power dynamics at play in media representations.

The theory of '*power/knowledge*' was developed in Foucault's 'genealogical-phase' of his work. Instead of categorising 'entities' and structures, he rather looked at the power-dynamics (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:13). To elaborate further, 'power' in this sense is not possessed by individuals or groups or entities; it rather operates through them, and it is across social practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:13). According to Foucault, power is productive;

“What makes power hold good [...], is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it includes pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. it needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression” (Foucault, 1980:119; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:13)

According to Foucault knowledge is formed by power, by being deeply embedded in power relations. Foucault's theory of power/ knowledge is relevant when analysing media framing of children in war, even though critical discourse analysis to some extent diverges from Foucault's understanding by including ideology. This will be further elaborated in chapter 3.2. It does however build on the understanding which makes it relevant. Moreover, it is applicable in this thesis; because media representations do not simply reflect reality, but they are actively constructing it by selecting certain narratives and discourses while excluding others. Therefore, those who control the media also wield power by determining what information is disseminated and how it is interpreted. This means analysing whose voices are amplified or marginalised, what discourses that dominate, and how representations serve to justify or perpetuate existing power structures.

3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Since the late 1980s critical discourse analysis (hereafter; CDA), has become an influential and visible divaricate of DA (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:447). It is an analytical qualitative approach aimed at interpreting and describing the way discourses construct and maintain social inequalities (Mullet, 2018:1). CDA aims to analyse “...opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language” (Wodak 1995; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). CDA involves the examination of why some meanings gain prominence or are unquestioningly accepted - and others marginalised, with power as an underlying relation in this manner (Bryman et al, 2021:492). Moreover, it involves examination of how language constructs ideas and practices (Bryman et al, 2021:492). There are many different approaches to CDA. The main ways in which the approaches differ lies in its definition of discourse, ideology, its relation with historical perspective and the understanding of power. Power within CDA can either be aligned with Foucault’s view on power as productive; or the understanding of power as a negative instance (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 64). There are, however, common features to CDA. Jørgensen & Phillips (2002) presents five features;

- 1) The discursive practices, in which text is both produced and assimilated, is regarded as a social practice that is part of making up the social world with social practice and social relations. Through linguistic-discursive practices, social and cultural continuity and change partially occur.
- 2) A discourse is a form of social practice; and just like these discursive or social practices make up the social world - the social world also constitutes these practices or discourses. It both changes, shapes and reflects social practices.
- 3) The way in which language is used should be analysed empirically within its social framework.
- 4) Discourses are ideological. This feature of CDA is dual; one branch examines discursive practices as influential in shaping and perpetuating unequal power dynamics among various social groups, such as minorities. Another aspect aligns with Foucault's notion of power as productive. However, it diverges from Foucault's theory by incorporating the concept of ideology to analyse how one social group is subjected to others.
- 5) Because the research in CDA is ‘critical’ it is therefore not politically neutral. CDA is committed to uncover how discursive practices play a role in unequal power relations to ignite social change. (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 61-64).

3.2.1 Fairclough's Theoretical Framework on Critical Discourse Analysis

As mentioned, there are several approaches to CDA, but for the purpose of this thesis I will draw on Fairclough's work. Fairclough developed a social theory of discourse and offers a practical methodological framework for conducting critical discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). The social theory of discourse underscores discourse as a vital aspect of social practice, serving to both perpetuate and alter knowledge, identities, and social relations, including power dynamics. Simultaneously, it acknowledges that discourse is influenced by various other social practices and structures (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:65). These social structures and/or practices include both discursive and non-discursive practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:65). Non-discursive practices, as defined by Fairclough, can be physical practices, such as drinking water from a glass, while the discursive practices are related to social relations; for example, how we write and speak about a phenomenon (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:65). Fairclough's framework is text-oriented; however, he stresses that analysis of the text alone, is not enough to provide an insightful understanding of the relation between text and the social world. Hence, an analysis of both text and the discourses, together with power relations, in which the text is produced is needed to gain an understanding of the social world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:65). Fairclough's three-dimensional model provides both a theoretical framework describing this relation between text, discourse and the social world, and a methodological framework for conducting CDA.

3.2.2 The Three-Dimensional Model

Through the three-dimensional model (Figure 1.) Fairclough provides a framework for conceiving and analysing discourse (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448).

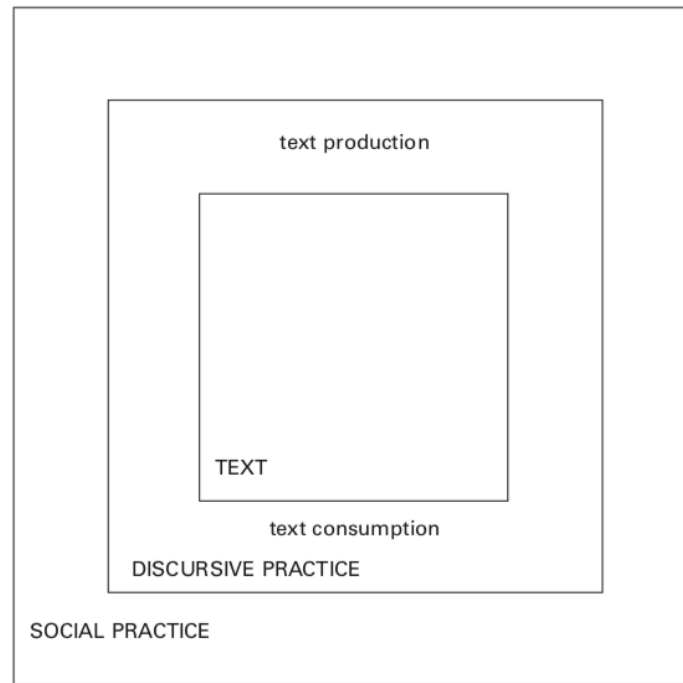


Figure 1. Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis

The first dimension in the model is the *'text dimension'*. This dimension constitutes the actual text: its content structure and meaning (Bryman et al, 221: 429). To elaborate further, this can include patterns in vocabulary, grammar, and structure in the text Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). The second is the *'discursive practice dimension'*, which is the examination of discursive interactions employed to convey meanings and beliefs (Bryman et al., 2021: 429). It refers to discourse as generated, circulated, distributed, and consumed within society (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). It is the analysis of linguistic-discourses, including how language is structured, what kinds of text that is produced and how these texts are used to enact power relations, identities, and social practices (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:448). Analysis of the linguistic features in the text (text dimension), will inevitably also involve analysis of the discursive practice dimension and the other way around. It is, however, important to separate the two (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:68). The third is the *'social practice dimension'* and refers to the social context in which the discursive dimension is taking place (Bryman et al., 2021:492). The social practice dimension emphasises discourse as a social practice, encompassing the ideological impacts and involvement in hegemonic processes (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000:449). The three-dimensional model then provides a framework that enables discourse analysis. The main notion of Fairclough's analytical model is the understanding that

text should not be understood and analysed isolated; it should be analysed in the social context in which it is created (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:70).

Chapter IV: Methodological Framework

I opted to ground my research efforts in CDA because it aligns with my research question; *Are there commonalities and differences in how children in war are portrayed in Scandinavian and Balkan media?*, and the sub-research questions; *(1) How are children in war portrayed in Balkan and Scandinavian news articles?*, *(2) What narratives can support commonalities and differences in the portrayals?*. Moreover, it fits with the thesis objective to; *Identify commonalities and differences in the portrayal of children whose parents fought for ISIS, as well as children during and after the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in news articles from Scandinavia and the Balkans.*

As presented in the theoretical framework; there is not a singular understanding of the theoretical basis of CDA and there is not a singular method for conduction CDA. It includes a range of approaches (Meyer, 2001:23), that connect in its similar theoretical features, such as the five presented by Jørgensen & Phillips (2000). However, there are also differences in how one defines and comprehends aspects such as power as either a negative instance or productive, what a discourse entails and how discourse works in relation to social practice and the social world, which results in theoretical variations. Because there are variations within the methodology for CDA, there is not a standardised way of collecting data (Meyer, 2001:23). CDA allows for a more formable method, depending on what is being researched. Therefore, the thesis merely draws its inspiration and foundation from the theoretical and methodological principles of CDA. Since CDA, is a hermeneutic approach, meaning that it puts emphasis on interpretation, meaning and the understanding of underlying context and nuances of discourses to find multiple layers of meaning (Meyer, 2001:25), I found it appropriate for the purpose of this thesis. There is seldom one singular representation of children in war, which makes CDA helpful, because it can enable me to find these ‘layers’ of meaning and representations. This chapter will further dwell into the methodological approach through presenting the method for data collection, sampling, limitations and how I chose to handle these.

4.1 Data Collection

The method for data collection in CDA greatly depends on the research question and the context being researched. Although there are no standardised tools for data collection in CDA, there is a great number of studies conducted using CDA. To gain a greater understanding of the methods for data collection in CDA's, I chose to read various studies, especially by Fairclough. By drawing inspiration from studies using CDA, and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, I tailored a method for data collection to fit with my research efforts. I collected articles from 14 newspapers, from Scandinavia and the Balkans. The following table presents an overview of the regions, country, newspaper sources, the timeframes from the oldest to the most recent article and the number of articles within each newspaper.

Region	Country	Newspaper	Years	Number of Articles
Scandinavia	Norway	Dagbladet	2016-2019	6
Scandinavia	Norway	NRK	2019-2022	4
Scandinavia	Norway	VG	2019-2021	6
Scandinavia	Sweden	Aftonbladet	2017-2023	6
Scandinavia	Sweden	Expressen	2019-2020	5
Scandinavia	Sweden	Dagens Nyheter	2016-2019	4
Scandinavia	Denmark	Jyllands-Posten	2019-2021	5
Scandinavia	Denmark	Berlingske Tidende	2019-2021	5
Balkan / BiH	Regional	Balkan Insight	2010-2022	16
Balkan / BiH	Regional	Al Jazeera	2003-2022	8
Balkan / BiH	Federation	Dnevni avaz	2005-2023	6
Balkan / BiH	Federation	Oslobodenje	2017-2023	6
Balkan / BiH	Republika Srpska	Nezavisne Novine	2005-2023	6
Balkan / BiH	Republika Srpska	Glas Srpske	2009-2022	6

I collected and analysed a total of 89 articles. When choosing what news sites to use, I looked at the most read news sites in each country. From Norway this entails Dagbladet, NRK and VG, from Sweden it is Aftonbladet, Expressen and Dagens Nyheter, and from Denmark it is Jyllands-Posten and Berlingske Tidende. The total number of articles from Scandinavia is 41. When determining data collection for the coverage of children in war from BiH I chose to use both news sites that cover all of Balkan with journalists from all the countries in the region, and local newspapers from BiH. I chose to collect from the former because it could provide me with a more nuanced representation of the discourses surrounding children in war in the region. With reference to the local newspapers, I chose articles from both the Federation and Republika Srpska. I did this to enable a more representative selection from BiH as the two entities are separated on many aspects, such as politics, policies and the understanding of the war. From Balkan as a region, I sampled articles from Balkan Insight and Al Jazeera. From the Federation I collected articles from Dnevni Avaz and Oslobođenje, and from Republika Srpska I collected articles from Nezavisne Novine and Glas Srpske. This leaves a total of 48 articles covering children in war in BiH. The articles from Balkan as a region were in English, while the local news articles in BiH were in the local language. This required me to translate the articles. As the premise of the thesis is based on the analysis of use of linguistics in written text, this can have implications for validity and reliability. I will elaborate further on the implications of this in 4.5.

4.2 News Articles as a Source of Data

Mass media, or in the case of this thesis; newspapers, can operate as a beneficial source of data (Bryman et al, 2021:509). Since I am analysing media representations of children in war, the most natural place to look for representations was newspapers. News media, for many, works as a ‘lens’ to gain insight to happenings around the world (Altheide, 2000:293). In other words, it is read and accessed by many people; and therefore, important to analyse. Because it is read by many it also holds the power to influence and shape public views - even though scholars remain divided in the debate of whether the media shape public views or if individuals impact media content (Altheide, 2000:293). In relation to discourse as both constituted and constitutive (Mautner, 2008:32), one could argue that the latter entails both. However, when distributed to many people the constitutive effect, through the shaping of public views is enhanced, which

gives media the power to “...shape widely shared constructions of reality” (Mautner, 2008:32). Because of this, newspapers can serve as an important source of data.

A lot of criticism concerning newspapers as a source of data, includes selective representation of specific events - therefore researching for example how many times something occurs, can be inaccurate - and selective information in the articles, due to author biases - meaning that only elements of an occurrence will be included (Ortiz & Walls, 2005:397). These are critiques that are important to keep in mind, however - since I am aiming to analyse the media representation of children in war, both selective representation and selective information in the articles can further highlight which discourses that gain dominance in the representation of these children, and the ones that do not.

4.3 Sampling

I chose to analyse written newspapers. There are many reasons as to why I chose written news articles. By using written news articles, I did not need to transcribe; the text is already there (Mautner, 2008:32). Moreover, since I am also using news from BiH which is in the local language, it would be harder to translate from, for example radio news and TV news. Because the chosen method for data collection is fairly inspired by Fairclough’s model, which is mainly text-based, I found written news articles most fitting for my purpose. I chose to use articles that are accessible online. As I am covering four different countries and two regions, I found this easier in terms of access. Online news articles are easier to access and can therefore provide a large amount of data. On the other hand, it was hard to find older news articles that covered BiH, since the time period I covered for this conflict was from after the war which ended in 1995. At this time online articles were not as common as they are today. I could assess some articles through a digital archive called “InfoBiro”, however, the representation of relevant articles for my research question was scarce. I therefore had to include newer articles from BiH. This means that the media coverage from BiH includes a longer time period than the coverage from Scandinavia. I will elaborate further on the limitations and consequences of this in 4.5. Because I used an archive for some of the articles, the representation is not exclusive online news. The sampling selection is therefore both online news, and news that perhaps originally were paper form, but were later digitised. The shared element between the two is that both the later digitised newspapers and those in their original online form, is that they are

all available online. Some of the news articles required payment for me to read them. I solved this by paying for a subscription.

There are some variations in the number of articles in each paper. This is due to how many relevant news articles I could find in each paper. For the news articles in Norway, I used Retriever. This was very useful and helped me to quickly find the articles relevant for my thesis. Because I could only access the Norwegian version of Retriever, I had to search for news articles manually for the other countries. The way I did this was by using the news sites search function; if possible, I sorted by the relevant years. This process was time consuming as I had to skim through thousands of headlines to find the ones relevant for my thesis. This could potentially affect the reliability of the thesis as I may have overlooked important and/or relevant news articles in the collection phase. On the other hand; The articles that I collected are relevant for the thesis, and can thus provide me with a perception of the dominant discourses surrounding children in war in the countries in question.

4.4 The Data Collection Process

While collecting the first round of news articles I simultaneously coded them, by writing down relevant words and sentences, such as for example “indoctrinated”, “security threat”, “victim” and “innocent”. For the first round I focused on the manifest meanings in the articles. This refers to the ‘text dimension’ as described in the three-dimensional model. In other words, I looked for patterns of vocabulary, grammar and the structures of the text - the visible and literal meanings. The relevant words and sentences I wrote down were then categorised, or coded. After the first round of data collection, coding and analysis I used the emerging themes to gather further data. I did the same thing while constantly comparing the emerging themes with the themes I had already uncovered.

After getting an overview of the prominent themes, I coded all the articles again, but this time I looked for latent meanings; referring to meanings between the lines, or the underlying interpretative meanings in the articles. I looked at how one article could contain multiple descriptions of the children. With reference to Scandinavian children whose parents fought for ISIS, one article could for example initially advocate for bringing the children home, but then the next paragraph follows up with concerns about the potential security threats they could pose upon arrival. To exemplify further, in article N2 (Suvatne, 2019) the headline is; "Want to bring ISIS-children home to Norway”, while the article further addresses that; “It is about ensuring

safety in Norway”, and; “...fears that the Norwegian ISIS-children have received weapons training, been brainwashed, and have witnessed severe acts of war”. Hence, some of the articles advocate for the children's rights, while simultaneously elaborating on the risk these children pose to national security. This contrast can influence readers by shifting the narrative by demonstrating how the notion of bringing the children home is intertwined with security concerns. In other words, I analysed how the text was structured to provide power to specific discourses surrounding the children, and how other discourses were marginalised within the same article. This relates to the ‘discursive practice dimension’ of the three-dimensional model. The themes that emerged were categorised. I found that many of the same themes or ‘codes’ emerged from the text-dimensional coding and the discursive practice coding. However, as mentioned in 3.2.2; even though one of the dimensions inevitably will include the other and vice versa, it is important to separate the two dimensions, because Fairclough separates them in his model and in his work (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002:68). Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that the analysis of underlying and interpretative meanings will be more influenced by the researchers' existing knowledge about the subject and the understanding of the context in question. Furthermore, it can be easier to ‘read’ the thing one wants to read to find aspects of the text that fits with the research question. I therefore found it important to keep the two separated.

After coding and categorising both the manifest and latent content in the news articles, certain themes began to emerge. I reviewed and analysed all the articles again with the social context in which the themes were taking place in mind. To exemplify; one of the themes that emerged was the reluctance of Scandinavian authorities to assist the children in Syria and Iraq in returning to their respective countries. This theme was dominant in the early debate of whether to assist the children or not. Later the debate became more proactive in terms of assisting these children. Therefore, it was essential to view and analyse the emerging themes within the social context the developing discourses were taking place. This refers to the ‘social practice dimension’ of Fairclough's three-dimensional model. After reviewing and analysing the articles for the third time the themes then eventually developed into broader discourses. These will be presented in chapter five.

4.5 Limitations

As mentioned so far there have been some limitations in the research efforts. I will elaborate further on these limitations, discuss how they can impact the research outcome and explain how I chose to handle this. This is crucial for transparency in the research efforts. Discourse analysis relies heavily on the researchers' interpretations, and selecting data inevitably involves personal judgement, making complete objectivity impossible (Mautner in; Wodak & Krzyanowski, 2008:37). Transparency is vital because it can strengthen the reliability and validity of the research efforts by detailing all aspects, including the shortcomings. This facilitates the ability to track the process. Additionally, since selecting data inevitably relies on my personal judgement of relevance, transparency allows readers to do their own assessment of how I draw my conclusions. Although complete objectivity is unattainable, I have endeavoured to critically examine my findings and questions from various perspectives. It has been crucial not to cherry-pick articles or elements solely aligning with my research question. During the research, I noticed that one article could contain multiple descriptions of the children in war, reflecting various perspectives. For example, one paragraph could elaborate on how children of ISIS fighters should not be punished for the parents' choices, and then be followed up by a paragraph stating that if the child should be able to return, DNA-testing will be conducted to establish nationality and that assisting the children's return is not an option. Another example is how articles about children during the war in BiH are politically charged, emphasising the suffering of children within a context that places blame on the conflicting parties. This highlights the portrayal of suffering children to evoke a sense of blame and victimhood, extending beyond the individual children themselves. The multifaceted descriptions within one article, demonstrates the importance of not selectively choosing elements that supported my anticipated outcome.

Another limitation arose with translation and language. CDA and the research approach I employed relies on the linguistic examination. When examining how language is used to constitute discourses, it is important to examine every detail in its usage. In my study, I used articles written in various languages; Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, English and Bosnian / Serbo-Croatian. Translating across these languages posed the risk of losing crucial elements and nuances. To address this, I initially coded and analysed the Scandinavian articles in their respective languages; Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish, before translating the findings into English. For the Bosnian and Serbo-Croatian articles, translation into English preceded coding and analysis. These articles were translated before coding and analysis, because I do not have

sufficient competence in the languages to code and analyse in the original language. The translations from Bosnian and Serbo-Croatian were carried out by Filip Jolevski, and I controlled the translation using AI. Despite these efforts, the translation may have led to the loss of subtleties, potentially influencing the research outcomes.

Additionally, to the challenges of translation is local language and contextual understanding. In other words; how things are spoken about, and for example metaphors can differ between languages and regions. To elaborate further, throughout the analysis of especially the local articles in BiH, I noticed that they are written in a distinctly different manner compared to, for example, the Scandinavian and English-written articles. They employ various metaphors and sayings that are culturally conditioned, which at times could be hard to understand and thus analyse. Hence, valuable insight and comprehension of the local context might be absent. To address this, I asked local people I know if my understanding of the metaphors and sayings align with their perspective. This served as a step to enhance the validity and contextual relevance of my findings. While it is possible that meanings were lost in translation or that I may not have fully grasped the culturally conditioned use of language, the considerable number of articles I coded should offer valuable insights into the discourses surrounding children in war. Additionally, a significant portion of the articles coded pertaining to BiH were in English, and the main findings in the English articles align with the findings in the local news articles. Hence, the analysis should be able to say something about the central discourses surrounding children in war within the scope of the research efforts.

As mentioned in 4.3 I could not find enough data for the original timeframe that was set for the data collection with reference to BiH. For the data collection I originally planned to look for Scandinavian articles in the time-period from 2014 to 2024, and articles concerning BiH from 2000 to 2010. This leaves a time period of ten years for each region. However, when collecting data, I quickly realised that it was hard to find enough data for BiH within the set time-frame. I managed to find and collect nine articles from this period but realised that it would not be enough to give a good representation of the discourses. I therefore decided to include newer articles to provide a better representation of the discourses surrounding war children in BiH. The earliest article I could find was from 2003, meaning that the timeframe for BiH is 21 years, compared to the Scandinavian representation which is ten years. This gives an unequal representation of the two regions, which can impact the results. However, I had to include a longer time period to avoid lack of data, and differing representation in the amount of articles. Additionally, I observed that the articles I retrieved from the designated time period tended to

be more descriptive compared to those from more recent times. They were more descriptive in terms of content, detailing aspects such as the number of casualties and similar factors. However, it is important to acknowledge that this observation may not be fully indicative of the media portrayal of children in war during that time. For instance, the digital archive I used to find older articles might have been selective in digitising articles, possibly aiming to provide a historical insight into media coverage during that period. While this could offer a historical perspective on media coverage from that period, it also introduces a potential limitation in terms of representativeness with reference to my research question. This emphasis on factual reporting may suggest that more descriptive reporting was a common journalistic approach during the specified period. This was also emphasised by Netland (1997) who highlighted the scarcity of psychological discussions concerning children living through the Bosnian war in media coverage (Netland, 1997:5). It is important to operate with caution in generalising these findings, as I do not have a comprehensive understanding of all published material. However, I will, for the purpose of the thesis, employ the assumption that descriptive reporting was more prevalent during this period. Therefore, I considered it appropriate to include newer articles to provide a broader and more nuanced picture of media portrayal of war children in BiH, and to prevent data shortage.

Chapter V: Analysis

In this chapter I will present the analytical work of the thesis. The dominant discourses surrounding children in war in Scandinavia and the Balkans will be presented. First, I will present the dominant discourses with reference to Scandinavian children whose parents chose to fight for ISIS. Then I will present the discourses surrounding children in war in BiH. The discourses are not distinctly defined; instead, they mirror the prevailing narratives found within the media representations in the selected articles. The discourses sometimes interfere with one another, while some discourses are conflicting. To exemplify, one of the discourses surrounding Scandinavian children whose parents fought for ISIS was ‘bring the children home’ while another was ‘disclaimer of liability’. This illustrates the conflicting nature of the discourses surrounding the children. With reference to children in war in BiH the discourses are more intertwined emphasising for example the ‘victimisation of children’ and the ‘innocent victims’.

The articles in the analysis are referred to with a letter and a number, for example ‘N2’ (Norway, article number two). The article ‘code’ and the article it refers to is defined in the appendix. The article can be accessed throughout reading by pressing Ctrl + f and typing in the article code.

5.1 Scandinavian Children in Syria and Iraq

This part will present the discourses surrounding Scandinavian children in Syria and Iraq, whose parents left to fight for ISIS. I identified ten discourses that were the most dominant in the analysis. These discourses are defined as ‘disclaimer of liability’, ‘security concerns over radicalization risk’, ‘prolonged stay increases radicalization risk’, ‘the children should not be punished for their parent's choices’, ‘bring the children home’, ‘exploiting children as entry tickets: concerns over family reunification’, ‘the vulnerable and traumatised child’, ‘the innocent victim of war’, ‘upon arrival: the children need support and strong networks’ and ‘prioritising the most vulnerable: advocating for the repatriation of orphaned children’. Some of the discourses are terms from the data material, while others are analytical concepts I developed through the analysis to better encompass the notion of the discourse. First, I will present the emerging discourses. Then, I will elaborate on which ones are more prominent and

which ones that are more marginal. Lastly, I will discuss which discourses that are intertwined and the ones that are conflicting.

5.1.1 Disclaimer of Liability

An analytical concept that emerged in the analysis is the 'disclaimer of liability'. This discourse reflects the reluctance of authorities to take proactive measures in assisting the Scandinavian children in Syria and Iraq, often citing the security situation, lack of legal obligations, and logistical constraints. The disclaimer of liability can be seen within various types of arguments against helping these children; or that the focus on helping the children is explicitly downplayed. The latter is demonstrated in officials' statements such as "Children is not our focus" (Article N1: Hultgreen, 2019) or that identifying and helping the children is "not PSTs task" (Article N1: Hultgreen, 2019). Within the Norwegian media narratives in the selected articles, it is emphasised that identifying children with Norwegian connections is not a priority task for the authorities. Moreover, this sentiment is echoed in the emphasis on that; the children have the right to come to Norway, but it is not an option for Norwegian authorities to actively intervene to bring them out. It is stated that "Norwegian citizens, nor the children will be brought home from the camps" (Article N1: Johansen, 2019) and that "the Norwegian state does not have any children" (Article N5: Suvatne & Gilbrant, 2019). Moreover, it is emphasised that as a Norwegian citizen outside Norwegian borders, you are responsible for your children yourself; child welfare only operates in Norway.

Similarly, the Swedish government's reluctance in helping the children, due to warnings against travel to ISIS areas and the inability to operate on the ground in Syria due to security concerns is highlighted in the media narratives. Officials have stated that there is "...no possibility to operate in this area at all" (Article S8: Ronge, 2019). Helping individuals in returning, and consular assistance was at the time being not an option for the Swedish government. Moreover, it is emphasised that the children are the responsibility of the parents. In Danish media narratives, hesitancy to take action in helping the children is underscored by the opposition to actively work to bring children home. To elaborate, it is stated that; "A large majority in the Danish Parliament supports the government's principal decision not to assist the approximately 40 Danish children in conflict zones in Syria and Iraq" (Article D8: Bjørnanger, 2020). Moreover, it is emphasised that the public interest is to not help the children. The undertone in the media representation is that; Danish children currently in the camps are there because their

parents were involved with the Islamic State, and that they should not count on their fellow countrymen in the effort to come to Denmark. Moreover, it is highlighted that it is too dangerous to send Danish soldiers to Syria to get the children home. The disclaimer of liability underscores a prevailing reluctance among Scandinavian authorities to actively intervene in repatriating Scandinavian children affected by ISIS affiliation.

5.1.2 Security Concerns Over Radicalisation Risks

‘Security concerns over radicalization risks’ among children affected by ISIS affiliation emerged as an analytical concept in the analysis of selected articles. The discourse revolves around concerns regarding national security risks, due to the potential of the children being radicalised because of their upbringing within the ISIS regime. The concern can be seen within various arguments and statements within the selected articles. For example, with reference to Norway it is emphasised that PST is responsible for Norwegian security, and they will therefore closely monitor those who return to Norway, including the children (Article N1: Hultgreen, 2019). Moreover, it is elaborated on the fear that Norwegian ISIS children have received weapons training, been brainwashed, and witnessed severe acts of war. It is commented that one can expect that the children are traumatised, and in some cases radicalised and that ISIS wants to use children as ‘missiles’ against Europe (Article N2: Suvatne, 2019). With reference to the latter, it is stated that; "It's not just about ethics and morality but about security" (Article N2: Suvatne, 2019). The overarching concern for the risk of children being radicalised, and how this might pose risks to national security is further underscored by comments such as; “PST says children who are used as executioners and soldiers may come to Norway and claim Norwegian citizenship" (Article N6: Sletten, 2016), and the elaboration on that IS uses children as executioners, soldiers, and suicide bombers. Headlines such as “Fears future terrorists”, are followed up by remarks stressing that the children have been trained and raised into the mindset of a terrorist, and that they "...have witnessed severe torture, barbaric executions, and desecration of bodies by ISIS fighters (Article N8: Alayoubi & Venum, 2019). Moreover, that; “Many of the children have received training in terrorism and weapon use” (Article N8: Alayoubi & Venum, 2019).

Correspondingly, the security risk accompanying potential radicalised children with ISIS affiliation has been given significant attention in the Swedish articles selected. It is commented that several Swedish children have been identified as having been used as child soldiers by

ISIS. Moreover, there are statements such as; “They learn to use heavy weapons, they are indoctrinated in anti-democratic ideologies” (Article S4: Kerpner, 2017), and; “The children who join terrorist organisations in Syria and Iraq are trained to become the next generation of terrorist fighters” (Article S4: Kerpner, 2017). This is followed up by elaborations on how children pose with Kalasjnikovs (assault rifle) in a propaganda film. In addition, it is underscored that Europol considers that: “The radicalised children present a special threat...” (Article S4: Kerpner, 2017). In the same notion, it is presented that the Swedish Command draws the same conclusion, affirming that; “Returned jihadists have been trained in the use of firearms and in bomb-making” (Article S4: Kerpner, 2017). It is highlighted that they may have an international jihadist network upon their return. It is further articulated that; “Returnees may pose a threat, and that’s what we assess in our monitoring of them upon their return” (Article S4: Kerpner, 2017). Additionally, those returning might intend to commit terrorism, or to pass on their knowledge of weapons handling. ISIS traveller’s children are pointed out as a particular risk, as they often continue to live with their extremist family. It is emphasised that: “Some very young children, aged 5, 6, and 7, handle violence, are exposed to violence, and witness violence” (Article S11: Rogsten & Olsson, 2019). Articulations that delve into the process of indoctrinating children into an ideology are central in various articles.

Similarly, Danish media presents the security concerns over the radicalisation risk among children whose parents travelled to fight for ISIS. This is evident in the elaboration of that “...there is concern whether the children over time may pose a security risk to Danish society” (Article D1: Leder, 2018). Furthermore, statements such as “...it is also about winning the children back from the hateful and brutal Islamism that has driven their parents into war” (Article D1: Leder, 2018), illustrates the perception that the children already are radicalised by their upbringing with extremist parents, within the ISIS society. This perception is further underpinned by writings such as; “The best way to learn to be a terrorist is probably by living under their influence” (Article D4: Haislund, 2019). It is emphasised that bringing the children home requires a security assessment and that: “The threat to Denmark’s security is priority number one” (Article D4: Haislund, 2019). Moreover, children over the age of 12 have been regarded as a security risk to Danish society, and few exceptions will be made when it comes to evaluating the potential for assisting this group of children. The security concerns over radicalization risk among children affected by ISIS affiliation, is prominent across various articles selected from the Scandinavian countries.

5.1.3 Prolonged ISIS Stay Increases Radicalisation Risks

Another analytical concept identified in the analysis is 'prolonged ISIS stay increases radicalization risks' for Scandinavian children upon return. The discourse emphasises the potential risk of radicalization the children face when staying in the camps, thus stressing the urgency of bringing the children home swiftly. This is prominent in all the Scandinavian countries in question. For example, Norwegian news articles stress that Norway is safer if the children are brought home at a young age; bringing the children home quickly is about Norway's security. It is stated that; "It's not just about ethics and morality but about security" (Article N2: Suvatne, 2019) and; "It's important for us that children don't remain in the hands of ISIS for too long, where they are indoctrinated into martyrdom." (Article N2: Suvatne, 2019). Furthermore, it is emphasised that the success of reintroduction to society is greater if children are reintroduced to society at a young age. This notion is furthered, by the emphasis on that the children are raised and educated in a mindset of terror, any remaining children could become potential terrorists in the future, which is why it is important to bring the children home swiftly.

Swedish media highlight that young children should return as soon as possible because it "...is desirable, both in terms of the child's best interest and for the long-term security of the homeland" (Article S12: Letmark, 2019). "Otherwise, there is a risk that they will be further harmed and may pose a future security risk" (Article S12: Letmark, 2019). Moreover, by letting the children stay with their extremist families, the effect can be delayed; "In 20-25 years, it could cause problems" (Article S9: Holm, 2019). Moreover, it is stated that: "Children who are left behind risk becoming "...angrier and showing greater disappointment towards Western society" (Article S12: Letmark, 2019). Similarly, this discourse is evident in Danish media, which emphasise that "...it increases the risk of radicalization of [...] children by letting the children and holy warriors remain in the refugee camps in Syria together" (Article D4: Haislund, 2019). The camps are described as drivers for radicalisation, because of the horrible conditions people, including children, are living under. Moreover, it is stated that "...the risk that the children could eventually become potential terrorists, according to PET, increased the longer they stayed in the detention camps" (Article D6: Samfund, 2019).

5.1.4 The Children Should Not Be Punished for Their Parent's Choices

A repetitive argument in the selected articles is that ‘the children should not be punished for their parents’ choices’. The discourse includes the resounding consensus that children should not suffer or be punished because of the choices made by their parents. It is emphasised that the children of foreign fighters have the right to return to Norway, as they are not to blame for the actions of their parents. It is stated that; “If there is anyone not to blame for the war in Syria it is the children” (Article N7: Kolberg & Stensvold, 2019) and that; “Children should not suffer for their parents lack of common sense” (Article N11: Johansen, 2019). Similarly, voices from Sweden advocate for assistance to children “... regardless of whether the parent is a mass murderer or a supporter in general of ISIS activities”. The importance of upholding the rights of children, despite of their parents past affiliations is underscored by arguments stating that; “To determine based on some sort of original sin which [...] children ‘deserve’ our care and which who do not, is a line of reasoning that is foreign to a modern legal state” (Article S13: DN's lederredaktion, 2019). It is highlighted that the wellbeing of the child should be prioritised above all else. This sentiment is echoed in Denmark, where it is asserted that “...the child, who is presumed innocent, should not suffer for the sins of their fathers” (Article D1: Leder, 2018). Moreover, that; “Children should be entitled to protection and should not pay for their parents’ actions” (Article D3: Politik, 2019). In one of the articles discussing whether the children should be brought home or not, dissenting subheading to the arguments showing reluctance to help the children was; “Do we punish children?” and: “Is it Danish politics to punish the children for their parents actions?” (Article D4: Haislund, 2019).

5.1.5 Bring the Children Home

Throughout the analysis of the selected articles the discourse of ‘bring the children home’ has emerged as a prominent theme in the debate of whether to assist the Scandinavian children in Syria and Iraq, or not. Voices in the media advocate for bringing the children home to their respective countries. It is emphasised that the discussion surrounding the children should focus on the best interests of the children; which is to bring them home. It is recurrently highlighted in the media across all the Scandinavian countries that the children must be brought home, both because it is urgent for the children's wellbeing, and because it is their right. The former is reflected in statements such as; “...children of Swedish ISIS terrorists must be brought home from the dangerous, filthy starvation camps in the Kurdish-controlled parts of Syria where they

are now living” (Article S13: DN’s lederredaktion, 2019). Moreover, the emphasis on the fact that children are the subject of discussion is highlighted through statements such as; “It is worth repeating: they are children” (Article S13), and “...we must remember that we are talking about children...” (Article D6: Samfund, 2019). Furthermore, it is stressed that; “They simply deserve our protection” (Article D6: Samfund, 2019). The notion of national ‘responsibility’ is visible through the many arguments as to why the children should be brought home. For example, it is stated that; “If they are Swedish citizens, there is a responsibility for the children” (Article S7: Sjöhult, 2019), and; “We have a responsibility for Danish citizens wherever they must be” (Article D3: Aagaard, 2019).

There are also legal arguments as to why the children should be brought home. It is highlighted that the children have the right to come to their respective countries, which is why the state should assist them. Moreover, that “...according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have certain rights to protection that we must fulfil” (Article D6: Samfund, 2019). Moreover, the notion of national ‘obligation’ is repetitive throughout the selected articles, illustrating that the countries reflect on the responsibility they have in assisting the children.

5.1.6 Exploiting Children as Entry Tickets: Concerns Over Family Reunification

Throughout the analysis of the selected articles the discussion of whether to assist the children in the return to their respective countries is central. A repetitive argument underpinning the negative instance in assisting the children is the fear that the children will be used by parents - or people claiming to be their parents - to come to Scandinavia by them applying for a family reunification after the children have returned. The discourse is visible within the various arguments concerning this aspect in the articles. For example, it is stated that “ISIS mothers cannot use their children as a ticket to Norway” (Article N13: Johansen, 2019), and that: “The children should not be used to come to Norway” (Article N14: Johansen & Amundsen, 2019). This argument is echoed by the emphasis on that it would be highly unfortunate if the terrorists used the children to seek refuge in Sweden as stated in article S13, and that the reason for not helping Danish children in the camps is because their parents can claim family reunification (Article D8: Bjørnanger, 2020). Moreover, it is emphasised in Article N13 and N14, that if mothers give up custody of the children, it might be relevant to bring them out.

In the context of family reunification, orphaned children are also discussed in the media representation, highlighting that parents should not emerge and seek reunification with

presumed orphaned children. Therefore, as presented in Article N14, the orphaned children who might be assisted to return to their respective country are required to take DNA-tests. DNA-testing is in this context also used to establish the child's nationality.

5.1.7 The Vulnerable and Traumatized Child

The media representation within the selected articles places a lot of emphasis on the traumatising experiences the children have undergone and the awful circumstances they are living under, underscoring their vulnerability as a result. The children are presented as vulnerable due to the horrible things they have witnessed, and because they are living in camps where there is high child mortality, lack of water, medical care, food and where temperatures are either extremely high or very low. It is stated that “...a large portion of these children are believed to have witnessed violence or otherwise traumatic events” (Article S15: Wierup, 2016) and that the children “...have witnessed severe torture, brutal executions and desecrations of ISIS-fighters” (Article N8: Alayoubi & Venum, 2019). Moreover, expressions such as; “The little boy was born amidst raging war” (Article S5: Hjertén, 2022), and; “His upbringing in a Syrian detention camp was marked by violence, death and starvation” (Article S5: Hjertén, 2022), contributes to highlight the cruelties the children have endured. Article S5 elaborates on the children of a mother who returned to Sweden from Camp Roj in 2018. The children have spoken “...a lot about 'slaughtering' and 'stabbing' people in their foster home” (Article S5: Hjertén, 2022). Moreover, the children who have returned show signs of deep trauma. The emphasis on severe trauma amongst the children is prominent, evident through the elaborations on the exposure to violence, death and deprivation the children have experienced.

The dire living conditions in the refugee and detention camps is underscored in the selection. It is stressed that due to the terrible conditions in the camps “...the situation of the children is particularly worrying” (Article N7: Kolberg & Stensvold, 2019). Moreover, that the access to food, water and medicine is scarce, resulting in that; “The risk of illness and death is high, especially among children” (Article N16: Johansen & Mikkelsen, 2019). Article D6, highlights how the camps are plagued by disease, that the children are malnourished and that there is an acute shortage of clean drinking water. The immense sufferings of the children are presented in articulations such as; “Secret children's hospitals are caring for small children who are hovering between life and death” (Article S7: Sjöholt, 2019). The emphasis on the challenges to the children's well-being is widespread. The psychological toll these children have

undergone is presented within the media representation. It is stated that because of what the children have experienced “...there will be a need for massive care to alleviate trauma” (Article D1: Leder, 2018), and that “...it will take several years before the children have a ‘normal life’” (Article D5: Indland, 2021). Moreover, Article D5 mentions anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and developmental issues experienced by children in the camps, indicating the profound impact of their experiences on their mental health and well-being.

5.1.8 The Innocent Victim of War

From the selected articles, the impression of the children as innocent victims of the war emerges. The presentation underscores their innocence and highlights the profound injustices they face due to factors beyond their control. One aspect is that their parents have inflicted the worst start to life on their children, stating that; “There is no forgiveness for the parents who took their children to the death realm of ISIS [...] or had children there” (Article D4: Haislund, 2019). Moreover that; “Children are innocent of whatever their parents may have exposed them to” (Article D3: Politik, 2019). The discourse is further visible in the direct description of the children as innocent victims of the war. In article N7 (Kolberg & Stensvold, 2019), it is stated that; “Every war is a war against children, where children are the biggest victims”, and that “If there is anyone not to blame for the war in Syria it is the children”. In article N2 (Suvatne, 2019), it is stressed that the children have done nothing wrong. The impression from the articles is that there is empathy and concern for the children who are innocent and affected by conflict, which further highlight the urgent need to safeguard their well-being and protect them from further harm.

5.1.9 Upon Arrival: the Children Need Support and Strong Networks for Care

The emphasis on the need for a strong support system for the returning children is central in many of the selected articles, suggesting a comprehensive approach to the welfare of the children returning from ISIS territories. It is highlighted that the children require substantial support and structured care systems to aid their reintegration and recovery. For example, Articles N4 (Rønningen, 2019), N6 (Sletten, 2016) and N7 (Kolberg & Stensvold, 2019) stressed the importance of finding good ways to take care of the children upon return and that strong support systems are important. Article N7, further calls attention to the importance of

creating a normal life for the children where they can go to school and reintegrate. It is argued that the camps are no permanent place for a child to stay, and that they need a normal life with psychological support and education. Article N10 (Kolberg & Stensvold, 2019) and N15 (Johansen, 2021) elaborates on the return of children, underpinning this notion by stressing that the children will receive the care they need, in addition to other necessary assistance from the child welfare services and other authorities.

The awareness of trauma and special psychological needs are highlighted in article S3, stating that; “Children of suspected ISIS terrorists might be severely traumatised and might need extra support if they return to Sweden” (Article S3: Haglund, 2019). It is further elaborated how this places high demands on social services and foster families, which is why a thorough investigation of the child's needs is crucial. The needs might depend on the specific situation each child has been in, however it is underpinned that “...the children returning from ISIS are absolutely a group that might need extra support...” (Article S3: Haglund, 2019). The urgency of establishing national plans for how to manage the needs of the returning children, is visible in article S9, stressing that; “Sweden must immediately establish a national team to handle already returned children and those who might come in the future” (Article S9: Holm, 2019). This is also echoed in article D1, where it is highlighted that it is important to consider how to handle these children. The article also lifts up a suggestion for a long-term plan for integrating the children, where children from the age of one should attend mandatory learning programs to learn Danish and Danish values. The program had been up for debate with reference to immigrant children but was heavily criticised. However, it is argued that “...precisely for the children of returning ISIS fighters, the proposal would both make sense and be legitimate” (Article D1: Leder, 2018).

5.1.10 Prioritising the Most Vulnerable: Advocating for the Repatriation of Orphaned Children

Another discourse that emerged from the analysis was the widespread consensus on the need to prioritise the repatriation and care of orphaned children from ISIS territories. For example, in article N14 (Johansen & Amundsen, 2019) it is highlighted that the government will work towards bringing orphaned children home, the underlying argument is that it is natural to bring out the weakest first. This sentiment is echoed in statements such as; “Orphans have a very special need for protection” (Article D4: Haislund, 2019). The notion of responsibility is central

within the discussion of orphaned children. For example, it is stated that “...the state’s special responsibility should be directed towards orphaned children, Swedish citizens who are orphaned” (Article S14: Jakobson, 2019). Moreover, that; “If there is a child without parents who is sick, we have an obligation to bring it home” (Article D2: Haislund, 2019). In article S14 it is argued that children who have parents are first and foremost the parent’s responsibility, underpinning the argument that orphaned children are in special need of assistance. The emphasis on that orphaned children should be prioritised is recurring throughout the selected articles.

5.2 The Dominant, Marginal & Conflicting Discourses

In the analysis of discourses surrounding the children of Scandinavian parents who travelled to fight for ISIS, it became noticeable that certain discourses emerged as dominant, while others remained more marginal. The discourse of ‘security concerns over radicalization risk’ has been at the forefront, reflecting the fears of the potential security threats these children might pose to the countries in question if they were to return. This narrative often intersects with the discourse ‘prolonged stay increases radicalization risk’, reflecting the risk of radicalization by letting the children remain in the conflict zones. With reference to fear of the radicalization risk over prolonged stay, the argument of ‘bring the children home’ was often accompanied with the argument that these children could potentially become radicalised if they stayed with ISIS sympathisers. The discourse ‘bring the children home’ was additionally seen in relation to ‘the vulnerable and traumatised child’, often citing that the children should be brought home to their respective countries as the circumstances in the detention camps were no place for children to stay, leaving them vulnerable and potentially traumatised. The argument stating that the children should be assisted in their return both with reference to the risk of the children becoming radicalised if they stay with ISIS sympathisers for too long, as well as the gruesome conditions in the camps - referring to ‘the vulnerable and traumatised child’ - was repetitive in the later (approximately the beginning of 2019) debate of whether to bring the children home. In the early debate, ‘disclaimer of liability’ was central. It was repeatedly stated in many articles that the states neither had legal responsibility or the possibility due to the security situation in Syria and Iraq to assist these children. These discourses emerged as the most dominant in the analysis conducted.

In comparison, some of the discourses remain more marginal. For example, ‘children should not be punished for their parents’ choices’. Despite this being a repetitive argument for assisting the children it was less dominant than the discourses mentioned above. Another discourse that appeared more marginal was the discourse of ‘exploiting children as entry tickets: concerns over family reunification’. This narrative suggests that there is a risk of adults using their children to secure their own repatriation. This argument was in some of the articles seen in relation to ‘prioritising the most vulnerable: advocating for the repatriation of orphaned children’. Governments prioritising the orphaned children, was also seen in relation to the understanding of the children as vulnerable - and that the most vulnerable should be prioritised. Slightly more prominent, but still marginal compared to the most dominant, was the discourse surrounding ‘upon arrival: the children need support and strong networks. The discourse highlights the necessity of providing comprehensive support systems. The discourse that emerged as most marginal in the analysis was the ‘innocent victim of war’. Although the notion of children's innocence was touched upon in some of the articles, its presence was sparse. This notion was mostly articulated by representatives from humanitarian organisations such as ‘Save the Children’. However, the discourse of ‘innocent victim of war’ can be seen in relation with the discourse ‘children should not be punished for their parents' choices’, thus strengthening the narrative of these children as innocent. Yet, its prominence remained more limited than the dominant discourses through the analysis.

Some of the discourses surrounding children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters were conflicting. Examples include discourses such as ‘disclaimer of liability’ versus ‘bring the children home’, or ‘security concerns over radicalisation risk’ and ‘innocent victims’. These conflicting discourses can be seen in relation to the ongoing debate on how Scandinavian governments should handle these children and what responsibilities they bear. One article often contains multiple discourses, and these are in many cases conflicting. For instance, in Article N2, it is stated; “We must focus on the best interests of the children”. This statement is in a line of argument as to why the children should be brought home. This is followed by the argument, “...it's not just about ethics and morals, but about security”. Contradiction between emphasising the need to help the children and while at the same time taking distance through highlighting the potential security threats, they pose is pervasive throughout many of the articles. Some of the reason as to why there are many discourses within one article is often that the articles contain statements from different representatives, such as political leaders, representatives from humanitarian organisations and the authors own reflections. The array of discourses

captures the complexity between humanitarian concerns and security considerations in the Scandinavian debate on repatriating ISIS children.

5.3 Children in the War in Bosnia & Herzegovina

The following part will present the discourses that emerged when analysing news articles concerning children in war in BiH. Ten discourses emerged through the analysis. These discourses are defined as; ‘victimisation of children’ ‘shattered childhoods: heartbreaking stories of the war’s youngest victims’, ‘innocent victims’, ‘justice and accountability’, ‘children at the frontlines in the war’, ‘young heroes amidst conflict’, ‘memory and commemoration’, ‘the psychological toll on the children’, ‘children born of war’ and ‘political undertones’. First, I will present the discourses I defined through the analysis, then I will elaborate on which of the discourses that were more dominant and which ones were more marginal.

5.3.1 Victimisation of Children

The war in BiH was marked by profound atrocities, and one repetitive theme within the selected articles was the atrocities committed against the children, or the victimisation of children during the war. The elaborations of these tragedies committed against children in the articles provide insight into the horrors faced by the youngest during the war. The atrocities against children during the conflict can be seen within personal stories from the war, descriptions of how many children that were killed, the brutality of the crimes against the children and descriptions of how the violence was systematic and targeted. The personal elaborations of the atrocities evoke a range of emotions in the reader, thus transforming the statistics from the war into more comprehensible experiences which enhances the reader's understanding. For example, article B5 (Brill, 2022), where Kenan’s story is elaborated, it is stated that; “My karate coach came to our door to throw us out of the apartment; his ultimatum was “Leave in one hour or be killed””. After throwing them out of the apartment the coach took his father and older brother to a concentration camp. Kenan further states that: “Before that, my elementary school teacher held a rifle to my head”. In Article B9 (Branic, 2017), the story of Jasmin, who was 13 at the time, explains how soldiers “...put a knife to the throat of a little girl from our neighbourhood, asking all the men to come out of the basement”. When coming out, he and his father were hit by the

soldiers, and others were shot in front of them. The story elaborates on how the last words his father spoke to him were; “Run, my son...”, and how he himself got shot; “I looked down at my torn shirt and saw pieces of skin hanging out of it”. Article RS12 (Simić, 2022) and RS8 (Srna, 2022) elaborates on the story of Rada whose nine-year old daughter was raped and killed in front of her. In Article RS12 Radas testimony is retold, through explanations of the gruesome event.

Many of the selected articles elaborate on the number of children that were killed. It is elaborated on how children have been found and exhumed from mass graves. For example, in article B8 (Brkanic, 2017) it is stated that; “Amila [...] was three months old when she was killed...”, and that “Nurka [...] and her newborn were exhumed from a joint grave in Drvar”. Moreover that; “The youngest victim to be found was a one-day-old newborn...”. Article B21 (News, 2004), writes about how 16 children have been found in a mass grave, and that; “The youngest victim found was a three-year-old child”. Article B1, elaborates on the children that were killed in the town of Gorazde, even after the UN (United Nations) declared the area a ‘safe zone’. It is stated that “...at least 64 children were killed and 203 injured from the moment the town was declared a safe zone to the end of the war” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020), which underscores how children were victims of atrocities even when they should be ‘safe’. Article B22 (Gadzo, 2020) and article RS3 (Velic, 2010) states that around 1,5000 children were killed in Sarajevo during the war.

The emphasis on the systematic and targeted nature of killings and atrocities against children is a recurring theme. Statements such as; “We know that the one pulling the trigger on the sniper rifle knew exactly who they were shooting at, therefore [...] children were, in the majority of cases, killed intentionally” (Article F7: M.S.S, 2023). In article RS7 the accounts of two girls being killed while playing hopscotch it elaborated. There was no military activity that day, and soldiers were sitting just an arm's length away from the girls, indicating that hitting them was purposeful. A witness states that; “Not even animals behave like that when killing” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018). Article RS4 further elaborates that the children mostly were killed 'purposefully' to “...diminish the resistance in Sarajevo” (Article RS4: Agencije, 2012).

5.3.2 Shattered Childhood: Heartbreaking Stories of the War's Youngest Victims

The selected news articles paint a harrowing picture of the impact of the war on children, through the stories of the children. The discourse emerges prominently through personal stories that convey the brutal realities these children faced. The shattered childhoods are demonstrated through personal stories that contain descriptions of loss of family and friends, direct exposure to violence and trauma, displacement and living in fear as well as scarcity and struggle for basic needs. The emphasis on loss of loved ones is a recurrent theme in the selected articles. The account of Ismail in Article B1(Dobraca, 2020), describes how he “...never got to meet his brother Mirsad”. The profound emotional scars inflicted by the war is underscored by the elaborations on the family’s grief. It is written that; “I remember how sad Eid was after Mirsad’s death. In the morning, we would try to cheer ourselves up, but when we went to the cemetery, my parents would embrace the gravestones, crying” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020). In the same article Senidas shares her story about her brother Haris and sister Medisa, who were playing outside when they were hit by a shell. They were taken to the hospital, and Senida recounts that; “...I ran into the room to see my brother and sister. Medisa was already covered with a white sheet” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020). Shortly after, her brother also died. Article B10 elaborates on Izudins story, who received chocolates from Ratko Mladic; “I was not scared and I didn’t know who he was. I only cared about the chocolate and I ate it immediately” (Article B10: Mackic, 2017). Later Mladic initiated the genocide in Srebrenica, Izudins recount that; “I was eight and when I try to recall it, I did not understand what was happening... There was chaos in Potocari, a lot of military, a lot of men” (Article B10: Mackic, 2017). He lost his father and cousin in the genocide. The notion of loss in the articles can be further demonstrated through elaborations such as; “He was just 13 when his father was shot and killed by a Serbian sniper during the nearly four-year war” (Article B17: Gadoz, 2018) and; “A Serb sniper positioned on a notorious cliff called “Spicasta Stijena” killed his older brother Amel while he was playing tennis, shooting him in the chest” (Article B22: Gadoz, 2020). With reference to this, the children's fear of losing loved ones is also reflected in the media presentation. The recallment in article B20, elaborates on the intensification of conflict in Višegrad. It is stated that; “Death and fear were all around me. I was just six years old” (Article B20: Memišević, 2020). Moreover, it is elaborated that; “I clearly remember telling her: “I wish they’d kill me first”” (Article B20: Memišević 2020), and that; “Death, however scary it may be to a child, sounded better than watching my mom being killed in front of my eyes” (Article B20: Memišević, 2020).

The destructive effect the war had on the childhoods, is further elaborated through personal testimonies that reveal direct exposure to violence and trauma. Article B2 elaborates on Nenad's story who was 16 when he joined the army. He states that: "You know all these stories about war crimes - I know them first-hand" (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). Article F11 (Price, 2023) elaborates on the story of two sisters who suffered severe injuries from a gas explosion that killed their mother. In article B9, Jasmin recalls his memory from when he and his father, as well as other locals were attacked by soldiers. One of the men got shot in front of them; "He fell down in front of us. His brains poured out. A puddle of blood appeared. I was in the state of shock" (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017). Jasmin was also shot; "As I began coughing, blood began pouring out of my mouth. I thought those were my last moments" (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017). Many of the personal stories elaborate on displacement and that they were constantly living in fear. In article B18, childhood during war is elaborated. They had to move to the neighbour's house as their house was not safe because there was no basement. It is described how the basement is dark, due to windows being shielded by sandbags. The door was the "...only ray of light..." (Article B18: Milisic, 2020). It is stated that; "I would often crack it open when no one was looking, observing our house and imagining what it would feel like to live back in our own place" (Article B18: Milisic, 2020). The recallment of living in fear are visible through the stories through writings such as; "Out of fear, I fell to the ground and began crawling" (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017), and; "The weirdest thing I remember about Sarajevo was walking out of the Holiday Inn hotel door and just not knowing if you were gonna be shot in the head" (Article B22: Gadzo, 2020). Moreover, "...none of us knew if we would survive" (Article RS2: Dra, 2023).

The selected articles highlight how the war deprived the children of necessities. The elaborations of their living situations such as; "Childhood in powder: milk in powder; eggs in powder; a house next to ours in dust" (Article B13: Juric, 2013), "Food was often so scarce, many would consume leaves from the ground in order to survive" (Article B17: Gadoz, 2018), and; "We ate nettles, warmed ourselves with wood we found in the nearby park, and fetched water at night to avoid snipers" (Article RS2: Dra, 2023), gives the reader a mirror into the horrifying circumstances the children endure during the war. The personal testimonies of the experiences during war paint a picture of how war shattered their childhood. The children lost close ones, could not go to school or play normally, they were displaced and basic needs such as food, water and electricity were gone. All these stories give the reader the impression that the children were deprived of a normal childhood.

5.3.3 ‘Innocent Victims’

The portrayal of the children as innocent victims is evident through language use and descriptions of the children across the selected articles. The articles emphasise the innocence and victimhood of these children, painting a vivid picture of their unjust suffering and the brutality of the conflict. The recurring description of the children as innocent victims can be seen through language use such as; “They were children, civilians! They did no harm to anybody. They were innocent victims” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020), and; “Those were innocent children” (Article B16: Dzinic & Panic, 2016). This language positions the children as blameless and emphasises their civilian status, underscoring the injustice of their deaths. Moreover, in article B16, a grieving parent questions; “What could he have been guilty of?” when referring to her 15-year-old son, highlighting the absurdity of any guilt being attributed to children. Article F3, elaborates the shelling that killed three children, while picking cherries. The language and descriptions in the article further underscore the children’s innocence through vivid explanations. It is described that the cherries are red today, but; “On that day, they were additionally covered with the red blood of innocent citizens” (Article F3: Muracevic, 2015). The explicit mention of ages and specific incidents further highlights this discourse in the selected articles. For example, Article RS4 elaborates on how a mother lost her one-year-old daughter, as she was shot by a sniper. It is stated that; “Can you imagine a person holding a sniper, looking at a mother and child, and shooting” (Article RS4: Agencije, 2012). Moreover; “I would like to see him, talk to him, and ask why he didn't kill me” (Article RS4: Agencije, 2012). The elaborations of the young children that lost their lives reinforces the picture of innocence lost. Articles RS6 (Rizanovic, 2009) and RS8 (Srna, 2022) describe efforts to memorialise the children who perished, such as a monument paying tribute to the “innocent children who perished” and a publication on the suffering of children titled; “What Were They Guilty Of?”. These descriptions serve as acknowledgements of the children's innocence.

5.3.4 Justice and Accountability

One of the discourses that emerged through the analysis was the emphasis on justice and accountability concerning the atrocities committed against children during the war. This is evident through the elaborations on lack of prosecutions, ongoing trials, and the persistent demands for justice by survivors and relatives of the victims. Through the analysis of the selected articles, the emphasis on the need for justice and accountability is prominent. This

further highlights the failures and efforts in addressing war crimes against children. Article B1 (Dobraca, 2020) illustrates this injustice through the elaboration of lack of convictions after 120 children were killed and 428 were injured in Gorazde during the conflict. Similarly, no one has been convicted for the crimes in Lozje, with cases still ongoing. This highlights a significant gap in accountability and justice, underscoring the frustration and despair of relatives and the children that were wounded still waiting for justice. The notion of injustice due to lack of prosecutions is profound in the articles. For example, in article B9, the story of a boy who survived an attack by soldiers in his village, wounding him and killing his father, is recalled. Jasmin, the boy in the story, states that there have been no prosecutions, and that there was never a trial; “That is why I speak about all this, to leave a written trace” (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017). The notion of injustice due to lack of prosecutions is highlighted in multiple articles through statements such as; “...no one has ever been held accountable” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018), and; “...no one has been prosecuted” (Article B15: Milekic et al, 2015).

There is also a focus on the lack of support from the state in terms of the many consequences that were inflicted on the children during wartime. Article B2 discusses the state has been “...promising to give former child soldiers special status and care, although it has not done this” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). Moreover; “In fact the state has firmly resisted former child soldiers’ attempts to win more rights” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014).). This indicates a failure to uphold legal obligations and provide justice to those affected. There is also a lot of emphasis on that the perpetrators eventually will get punished for their acts. For example; “Justice may be slow, but those who committed crimes [...] will eventually be brought to justice” (Article F3: Bajramovic, 2014), Moreover, article F1 elaborates on importance of coexistence, respect and tolerance, and; “For this to be so, justice must be served, and the perpetrators of terrible crimes, including the one we commemorate today, must be adequately punished” (Article F1: Muracevic, 2015).

5.3.5 Children at the Frontlines in the War

The elaborations of children fighting in the war became visible through the analysis. This portrayal is evident through the accounts of children who were directly involved in combat, the numbers indicating the scale of their involvement, and the reflections on the long-term impact of their participation. The experiences of these young combatants, the conditions they faced, and the psychological toll of their involvement in the war is highlighted. Article B2 elaborates

on the involvement of children in the conflict, estimating that around 2000 children fought in the Bosnian War, with some estimates suggesting the number could be as high as 4000. It is stated that 661 soldiers between the ages of 10 and 18 got killed. The article mentions that these children often fought in horrific conditions on the frontlines, highlighting the severity and brutality of their experiences. Moreover, personal stories are elaborated in the article, Sanel who was 16 at the time recalls that “...when you lose your first friend, after you carry who knows how many dead and wounded bodies, after you see the face of war, you are seriously damaged until the end of your life” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). Article B7 (Spiac, 2017) elaborates on how boys who were too young to join the army guarded around Sarajevo.

5.3.6 Young Heroes Amidst Conflict

The portrayal of the children that were war children are underpinned by a notion of them being ‘heroes’. This is evident through the personal stories highlighting their bravery, tough volunteering to protect loved ones, participating actively in defence efforts, and demonstrating courage and resilience in the face of danger. Through many of the articles the elaborations on these children’s heroism and the significant roles they played during the conflict are visible. For example, in article B2, Keno recalls that; “I was with the people I loved, I felt like I was protecting my mother, sister and that was all that mattered” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). In article RS10, the stories of Spomenko who was 14 when he enlisted and Igor who was 13 is elaborated on. It is written that they “..were among the boys who could not just watch as the enemy attacked their homes and people” (Article RS10: Симић, 2022). Moreover, that; “These young heroes, far ahead of their generation, traded books for uniforms and rifles, standing on the homeland's defence line” (Article RS10: Симић, 2022). Their stories of courage and sacrifice emphasise not only their heroism but also the heavy burdens and responsibilities they bore at such a young age.

5.3.7 Memory and Commemoration

The emphasis on memory and commemoration is prominent in the selected articles, underscoring the efforts to remember and honour young lives lost, the personal stories preserved, and communal commemorations to keep the memories of these children alive. One of the central aspects within the discourse is the creation and presence of physical monuments

dedicated to the memory of the children who perished. For example, in article B1, it is written that; “The monument is standing there, but the children are gone” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020). This suggests a narrative of loss and the symbolic role of monuments in preserving memory. Moreover, article RS7 elaborates on the creation of a monument of the killed children, to ensure that the crimes that were committed against them are not forgotten (Article RS7: Srna, 2018). Many of the articles elaborate on gatherings and markings of anniversaries to remember children that were killed during the war. This is visible in article B16 (Dzinic & Panic, 2016), B24 (News, 2005), F1 (H. I. J., 2023) and F10 (Malisevic, 2022) - where all the articles elaborate on the gatherings and commemorations to remember the violations. Some of the articles also highlight the personal narratives within the collective memory of war. This is visible especially in articles B11 (Rose, 2017) and F12 (Oslobodenje Portal, 2017) that both call attention to the ‘War Childhood Museum’. The museum serves as a repository of personal memories, where individual stories and items are displayed. The articles use language, through its imagery and sensory details, that encourages the readers to reflect on the personal significance of more or less ordinary items. For example; “At the entrance, visitors are greeted by an antique, handcrafted swing in which a little girl, due to the beginning of the war, never got to enjoy” (Article F12: Oslobodenje Portal, 2017).

5.3.8 The Psychological Toll on the Children

The psychological toll the war had on the children is described in a great number of the selected articles. The articles present descriptions of the profound mental and emotional impact that conflict has on children, presenting a consistent narrative of trauma and long-term psychological consequences. These narratives contribute to a broader discourse on the severe mental and emotional consequences of war on children, illustrating how deeply these experiences can scar them. The elaborations on the psychological toll on the children can be seen in, for example, article B2 (Ahmetasevic, 2014) which highlights the issue of posttraumatic stress disorder among the children who fought in the war. Moreover, article B9 provides a personal account of a child who experiences mental health issues after fleeing the war. Extracts from the accounts are; “...I used to jump whenever I heard a strange sound, I trembled and did not communicate with anyone (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017). Furthermore, he elaborates on how he was afraid of everything and that he had recurring nightmares; “I dreamt about my father. It haunted me” (Article B9: Brkanic, 2017).). In article RS1 the headline in

capital letters states: “PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA in 85,000 children” (Article RS1: A. F. P., 2005). The article further details how the horrors of war, including witnessing deaths of parents, have left lasting scars. According to the article; “Many children still cannot shake off nightmares, suffer from chronic headaches, and stomach pains” (Article RS1: A. F. P., 2005). Article RS5 (Klix.ba, 2013) discusses a study conducted in Sweden that found mental health problems in refugee children from BiH.

A recurring theme in these articles is how the children felt older than their age due to the traumatic experiences of the war. The personal account of a child soldier who was 15 when he joined the fighting elaborates on that; “When I turned 18, I felt like I was at least 36 years old” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). In article B1, the personal accounts of being wounded in an attack that killed his father is elaborated. After laying wounded in a basement for days he was brought to a hospital. It is written that; “When I got there, I grew up overnight and began thinking of how to save myself” (Article B1: Dobraca, 2020). Additionally, in article B22 it is stated that; “That day I can say that my childhood ended, but I wasn’t aware of it” (Article B22: Gadzo, 2020). These narratives illustrate that the psychological toll of war extends beyond immediate trauma, fundamentally altering the course of these children's lives. Collectively the selected articles reflect the broader discourse of ‘psychological toll on the children’. The articles highlight the severe and long-lasting psychological issues faced by the children affected by war. The articles not only provide personal accounts and statistical data, but also emphasise the need for recognition and treatment.

5.3.9 Children Born of War

The term ‘children born of war’ works as an analytical concept to encompass the discourse that underscores the circumstances of children conceived during the war. The articles focus on their struggles, identities and the social stigmas they face. Article B6 (Stojanovic, 2022) writes about an exhibition by ‘The Forgotten Children of War Association’, an NGO dedicated to advocating for the rights of children born as a result of the war in BiH. The exhibition aims to raise awareness about the children who were direct consequences of wartime rape, relationships with UN peacekeepers, and as a result of relationships with humanitarian workers during and after the conflict. The goal of the exhibition is to bring light to the existence and experiences of these children, emphasising the need for societal recognition and support for their rights. In article B20 the Vilina hotel is discussed; “It is suspected that at least 200 Bosniak girls and

women were held at Vilina hotel and systematically raped...” (Article B20: Memišević, 2020). It is further elaborated that the hotel known for being a rape camp, kept women “...in order to be inseminated by the Serb seed” (Article B20: Memišević, 2020). The article highlights the traumatic origins of some of these children's lives, born from systematic rape intended to inseminate women and girls with the perpetrators' ethnicity. This historical context sets a background for understanding the psychological and social challenges faced by children born from such atrocities.

Article F2 provides a personal account of a boy, whose mother was raped during the war, subsequently giving birth to him. The mother was unable to emotionally connect with the child, thus leaving him at the hospital. Growing up, the boy faced the painful burden of knowing he was unwanted. His discovery of his origin came through schoolyard taunts, which led to revelations from his adoptive parents. In the article it is stated that; “Chetnik child, bastard, war child, found in a dumpster... these are words that left scars on his soul...” (Article F2: Bajramovic, 2014). Despite these harsh realities, the article illustrates his resilience as well as the complex emotions tied to a desire to meet his biological parents. He seeks answers and closure. These narratives contribute to illustrate some of the challenges faced by children born of war. The articles include both personal accounts and broader societal implications, emphasising the need for recognition, support and deeper understanding of the unique struggles endured by the children.

5.3.10 Political Undertones

The analytical concept of ‘political undertones’ is reflected in the selected articles, illustrating that narratives about children affected by the war in BiH are intertwined with political perspectives and agendas. The narratives presented in the news articles reflect how historical memory and current interpretations are influenced by political agendas and ethnic division. For example, article B22 elaborates on the photo project started by Dzemil after the war to find photographs of his brother who got killed during a ceasefire in Sarajevo. When he began looking for photographs of his brother, he realised that perhaps others wanted to find photos of their loved ones, which became the beginning of the project. The article emphasises that Dzemil’s project has evolved into a testimony of the authorities taking place during the war, serving an important purpose amidst increasing denials of facts by fascists, including Serb politicians. It is written that; “A camera doesn’t lie”, and; “I do this out of love for my killed

brother and all other kids who were killed” (Article B22: Gadzo, 2020). Moreover; “It’s important that we keep it safe from forgetfulness or distorted narratives of certain countries and ideologies” (Article B22: Gadzo, 2020). The article further elaborates on the denial of atrocities from Republika Srpska, as well as spreading lies. The article eventually reflects on how many of the children are well off today; “So it’s in a way to tell these people who were shooting at us, ‘Screw you...we are still here’” (Article B22: Gadzo, 2020).

In article F8, statements such as the following are included; “Murdered children in Sarajevo are now victims of propaganda” and that yet another “...manipulation and lie that originated from Republika Srpska” has been uncovered. The article elaborates on how Republika Srpska has used the names of killed children of besieged Sarajevo in a published list of children killed by “Muslims and Mujahideens”. It is stated that; “I specifically did not expect that they would be willing to commit such a deception, to use those children whose childhood they destroyed [...] for their propaganda purposes” (Article F8: Sahinpasic, 2023). The manipulation of history to serve political agendas demonstrates how children are being placed in the centre of this narrative struggle. In article F10 it is stated that; “...even after 27 years since the end of the war, aggression against our youth and intellect continues through other means”, and; “...study as well as you can and become educated individuals, because then the enemies of this country will not be able to do anything to you...” (Article F10: Malisevic, 2022). Furthermore, in article RS4, which elaborates on the publication of the book ‘Crimes Against the Children of Sarajevo’ (Original title: Zločini nad djecom Sarajeva) it is written that: “Serbia continues with the same policy towards Bosnia that led to the war...” (Article RS4: Agencije, 2012). Some of the selected articles also place the ethnicity of the children who were victims of atrocities in focus. This can be seen in statements such as; “They killed Serbian children with Snipers...” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018), “..the remains belong to 72 Muslim civilians, including 16 children...” (Article B21: News, 2004), and; “They will initiate the creation of a monument-marker on which the names of Serbian children killed in Sarajevo will be inscribed so that these crimes will not be forgotten and to remind what happened to Serbian children in Sarajevo” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018).

Historical accounts about children in the war also reflect the continuous ethnic division in the country. In Article B24 (News, 2005) it is stated that; “...the Serb separated us from our men and boys, executed or slaughtered them in cold blood and dumped them in mass graves”, and in article B22 (Gadzo, 2020) it is stated; “At the same time, the Serbs were ‘hunting’ the Muslim men and boys who fled...”. Article RS7 elaborated on the personal account of a soldier

who witnessed the murder of two girls during a ceasefire. It is stated that “...not even animals behave like that when killing”. Moreover, it is emphasised how the soldiers did not respond as “...we strictly respected the ceasefire” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018). The article further elaborates on the Muslim terrorist group ‘Ševe’; “Whose snipers killed not only Serbian civilians in part of the city under Serbian control but also Serbian and Bosniak civilians, including children, in Sarajevo under Muslim control, blaming Serbs for it” (Article RS7: Srna, 2018). In article RS11, statements such as the following is included; “Thousands of children experienced firsthand all the horrors that war brings, and hundreds of them [...] did not live to see freedom because the enemy’s hand was quicker and merciless”, The article further elaborates on an attack on a family. When the father came to the hospital with his wounded daughter, he was told; “We do not treat Chetnik children” (Article RS11: Симић, 2022). In summary, the portrayal of children in the selected news articles shows how political undertones are reflected. It can be seen through direct accounts of ethnic violence, memorialization efforts, or the manipulation of historical narratives. Children are repeatedly positioned as symbols within a larger political discourse of the Bosnian war. This does not only underscore their victimhood, but also highlights how their stories are used to serve differing political agendas and narratives.

5.5 Marginal & Dominant Discourses

In the analysis of children affected by the war in BiH the dominant and marginal discourses in the media representations of the children have a less clear distinction between dominant and marginal discourses, than in the analysis of children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters. Additionally, the discourses did not appear conflicting, as some of the discourses surrounding children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters were. Even though there was a less clear distinction between the dominant and marginal discourses there were some differences. The discourses surrounding children in war in BiH identified as most dominant where; ‘victimisation of children’, shattered childhoods: heartbreaking stories of the war’s youngest victims’, ‘innocent victims’, ‘memory and commemoration’ and ‘political undertones’. Slightly more marginal but still prominent, war the discourses of, ‘justice and accountability’ and ‘the psychological toll on the children’. The discourses that appeared most marginal were ‘children at the frontlines in the war’, ‘young heroes amidst conflict’, and ‘children born of war’.

Overall, the discourses surrounding the children affected by the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina predominantly focus on humanitarian aspects. The war actions the children were subjected to

are thoroughly described, and their stories from the war days receive significant media attention. This not only gives the children a voice but also directs attention to their individual experiences, providing readers with a more profound insight than mere descriptions and statistics. The discourse of ‘memory and commemoration’ emphasises the losses of civilians, including children, during the war. ‘Innocent victims’ is a recurring theme, often underscored in the articles and is visible in the other discourses as well. The ‘political undertones’ discourse reflects the ongoing national and ethnic divisions that persist in the country. The discourses of ‘children at the frontlines in the war,’ ‘young heroes amidst conflict,’ and ‘children born of war’ appeared as the most marginal. Although this thesis does not dwell deeply into these aspects, it raises the question of whether the marginality of these discourses is due to a form of taboo. This could be related to the fact that child soldiers or children born of war might face stigmatisation.

5.6 Portrayal of Children in War

Throughout this chapter the dominant discourses surrounding children of Scandinavian foreign fighters and children affected by the war in BiH has been presented. The discourses identified through the analysis serve as an answer to the research question; *How are children in war portrayed in Balkan and Scandinavian news articles?* The CDA conducted of the two cases provides a multifaceted view, revealing that portrayals are not straightforward - they are complex through being both intertwined and contradictory. Many ways of describing children can appear within the same article, as different voices - such as experts, representatives and personal accounts - contribute to the narrative. Thus, the thesis does not provide a straightforward answer to how children in war are portrayed in Balkan and Scandinavian news articles. Instead, the answer lies in the variety of discourses identified through the analysis.

While these discourses do not provide clear-cut definitions, they offer a broader insight into the narratives surrounding these children within the scope of the selected articles. I want to highlight that discourses emerging from the analysis are not all-encompassing descriptions of how children in war are portrayed in Scandinavian and Balkan media, as the discourses are limited to the portrayals within the selected articles. The intention is to offer insight into the narratives that emerged from the analysis.

Chapter VI: Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the differences and commonalities in the portrayals of children born to Scandinavian foreign fighters of ISIS and children affected by the war in BiH.

6.1 Children in War as Innocent Victims & Security Threats

One of the most prominent differences that emerged through the analysis was the distinction between how children are perceived as ‘security threats’ or ‘innocent victims’. There is a clear divide where children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters often are highlighted as potential security threats, either because there is a potential for them already being radicalised or because they could become radicalised if they remain in the camps, where they are surrounded by ISIS sympathisers. In contrast, children affected by the war in BiH are largely portrayed as ‘innocent victims’, employing a humanitarian aspect in the media portrayal. As a more marginal discourse, children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters were occasionally described as innocent. This narrative, however, was often followed up with the notion that they could become radicalised if they remain in the camps - hence, the need to repatriate them while they are not yet radicalised. This is reflected in statements such as “...small children should come home as soon as possible”, followed by; “The risk otherwise is that they are further harmed and could become a future security risk” (Article S12: Letmark, 2019). Similarly, in article D1 (Leder, 2018), it is stated that “...the child, who must be presumed innocent, should not be blamed for the sins of the fathers”. This is followed by; “There is concern that over time these children could pose a security risk to Danish society, and therefore it is prudent to already consider how to address these children”. Despite acknowledging that the children may be innocent, this recognition is often overshadowed by remarks about the potential for radicalization if they remain in the camps.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters are directly portrayed as security threats. Language referring to these children as ‘missiles against Europe’, ‘executioners’, ‘soldiers’, ‘suicide bombers’ and ‘future terrorists’ circulated in the selected articles. It is frequently emphasised that these children have witnessed gruesome acts, learned to handle weapons, and been trained to kill - all in an extremist environment. A significant majority of articles discussing children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters focus on the potential security threat these children may pose. This stands in contrast to the portrayal of children

affected by the war in BiH, which often emphasises their status as innocent victims of war. A lot of emphasis is placed on the victimisation of innocent children, highlighting their vulnerability and the injustice of their suffering. Through recounting the victimisation of children during the war, the narratives- both through personal stories and descriptions of specific events- evokes empathy. Moreover, the language in the articles directly refers to their innocence through descriptions of the children as ‘they did no harm’, ‘they were innocent victims’ and ‘innocent citizens’. The discourse ‘shattered childhoods: heartbreaking stories of the war’s youngest victims’, further underpin the notion of the children as innocent victims, by providing space to the personal accounts of the war’s consequences on the children. Through personal stories that vividly elaborates on the brutalities these children faced detailing the gruesome events they witnessed during the war, a perception of these children as innocent victims is strengthened. There are also elaborations detailing the gruesome events children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters endured, such as beheadings and killings. However, this narrative is often directed towards the fact that the children were raised in an extremist environment, thus viewing such actions as ‘normal’.

This finding seems to align with the literature on children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters and the literature on children affected by the war in BiH. Koegeler-Abdi, argues that the media discourses surrounding the children as potential threats as future terrorists can undermine focus on the children's rights and the humanitarian aspect (2024:252). This aligns with MacDonald & Smiths findings, arguing that the focus on the children as potential security threats overshadow the humanitarian stand (2019:224). Moreover, Athie (2018), draws attention to the children being perceived as potential security threats. Contrary, literature on children affected by the war in BiH, highlights the humanitarian aspects through the personal stories of the children, such as Zoghloft et al., (2021), or draws attention to the psychological consequences such as Hasanović (2011), and Smith et al. (2002).

6.1.1 Our Children and Their Children

With reference to the distinction between security threat and victim, it is worth highlighting the use of language about the children in many of the news articles. This becomes particularly evident in Scandinavian media, where children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters are repeatedly referred to as ‘ISIS-children’ or ‘Syrian-children’ - additionally, there are mentions of the children as ‘children with Danish background’. Such terminology contributes to a sense of

distance. This feeling of distance is reinforced by statements such as; “The Norwegian state has no children” (Article N5: Suvatne & Gilbrant, 2019), and the repeated argument emphasising that the children are the responsibility of the parent. This alienation or separation from the children not only emphasises the geographical distance - since the children are outside of Scandinavia - but also creates a separation from them as individuals. The articles about the children affected by the war in BiH, focuses on portraying them as victims of the war in their homeland. Some of the articles do however, put emphasis on the nationality and ethnicity of the children, as demonstrated in the discourse ‘political undertones’. On the other hand, the overall impression through the analysis is that the children are not alienated in this context, but rather emphasised as innocent civilians that were victims of the civil war.

6.1.2 Children at Frontlines

The analysis of children affected by the war in BiH revealed that there was a noteworthy presence of child soldiers. These children were often deployed to dangerous places; “...during the war, teenagers who were in the army often volunteered to go where nobody else wanted to go” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). One account states that; “I wanted to stop, but there was no way out after some of the things I did and witnessed” (Article B2: Ahmetasevic, 2014). The portrayal of child soldiers in BiH often emphasises their victimhood and heroism, trading school-books for uniforms, thus their need for state recognition. This narrative stands in contrast to the discourses surrounding children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters, which frequently label them as potential security threats due to, among other things, their potential involvement in war activities. It is stated that; “It is not certain that they want to continue the fight in Sweden, but it could be so” (Article S4: Kerpner et al., 2017). It is, however, important to keep in mind that the conditions for children who fought in BiH and Scandinavian children engaged in war activities advocated by ISIS, are markedly different. Hence, making it important to keep a distinction between the two, without undermining that there might be similarities in the individual sufferings endured by the children who were caught up in conflict.

6.1.3 Summary

The analysis showed that the biggest difference in media portrayals was that children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters often are associated with security risks, while children affected by the war in BiH are portrayed as innocent victims. I want to highlight that this is two very different conflicts, and that comparison in this context is not to equate the situations. The purpose is rather to illustrate how media representations of specific groups can accommodate certain narratives, and that these narratives can differ across regions and contexts.

6.2 Hardships in and After War

A commonality in the portrayal of the children was that discourses in both groups focus on the consequences of war and conflict on children. Despite differing narrative focuses between children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters and children affected by the war in BiH, both media representations highlighted the hardships children endure in war and conflict. Regarding ISIS children, discourses were rather dual in the focus of the impact on their situation. On one hand, narratives emphasised these children as vulnerable individuals subjected to hardships and in need of protection. This was often highlighted in the context of the dire conditions and violence in the camps they reside in. This narrative underscores their suffering and the necessity for safeguarding them from further harm. On the other hand, some narratives focused on the children being traumatised, followed up by accounts about the concerns of these children being radicalised, which in turn underscores the narrative that these children can serve a potential security threat. The latter can contribute to undermining the suffering these children have and continue to endure.

In the portrayal of children during the war in BiH, the discourses on the consequences of the war on these children are more cohesive. Through personal accounts, insight into the children's experiences during the war and how this affected the children are obtained. Furthermore, several articles focus on the fact that the war had psychological consequences for the children, such as PTSD and trauma. Despite differences in how the hardships faced by these children are portrayed in the media, they meet in a commonality through this aspect being included. This is seen through narratives highlighting both the physical consequences of children in war such as through war related events and losses, as well as long-term psychological effects, such as PTSD and trauma. The hardships endured by the children as portrayed in the news articles, seem to

align with the five broad categories of children in war and exile as presented by Netland (1997:54-56). These categories appear especially appropriate with reference to the experiences of children affected by the war in BiH, which is reflected in the presented discourses.

6.3 Children in Political Narratives

Another commonality that emerged through the analysis was that children in both groups are involved in political narratives. The nature of how political narratives are manifested as discourses surrounding the children differs, however both groups of children are subjected to broader political disputes and debates. With reference to children born of Scandinavian ISIS fighters there is an ongoing debate on whether to, and if they were to, how to assist these children in returning to their respective countries. This is a political debate, and how these children are portrayed, can to some degree be seen with reference to the political debate. Through the analysis it became evident that the humanitarian aspect and the children's needs and rights often were overshadowed by narratives highlighting these children as potential security risks, and by their parents' wrongdoings. This corresponds with Koegler-Abdi's findings, and she argues that Norway, Denmark and Sweden "...delayed their decisions and tended to place national security concerns as well as the punishment of the mothers above the children's rights to return" (2024:233). Even though children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters are recognized as Scandinavian, and that they wrongfully have been affected by ISIS affiliation because of their parents' choices, the reluctance in assisting them and the perceived security threat they might pose is more prominent in the media representation. Moreover, the yearning to punish the parents appears stronger than humanitarian efforts in assisting these children. Without going too much into how the media portrayal affects political decisions, it is in this context worth mentioning that a repetitive argument for not assisting the children in their return was that the parents later could claim family reunification. Koegler-Abdi, had similar findings, arguing that acknowledging the children's right to be accompanied by their mothers in the return, influenced the political decision not to assist them (2024:250).

The political narratives in the discourses surrounding the children affected by the war in BiH are visible in through the discourse 'political undertones'. As mentioned, the discourse reflects how the portrayal of these children is intertwined with political perspectives, agendas and ethnic division. This is illustrated in how the Federation and Republika Srpska are presenting different narratives about atrocities taking place. For example, in article F8, where it is stated

that murdered children are victims of propaganda, because a list of childrens names was published as being killed by “Muslims and Mujahideens” by Republika Srpska, which turned out not to be correct. Many of the articles place blame on the conflicting sides in the war for atrocities, and certain events are highlighted, while the nationality of the victims are highlighted. Demirel (2022) wrote about victimhood narratives in BiH and argues that; “Narratives concerning past suffering are utilised to strengthen collective identities and shape subjective perceptions about who is right or wrong, who is the victim (ingroup), and who is blameworthy (outgroup) in post-war contexts, potentially impeding reconciliation processes.” (Demirel, 2022:1771). This argument can also be seen in relation to the media portrayal of the children affected by the war in BiH, demonstrating that they are involved in political narratives.

There is a difference in how political narratives manifest as discourses within the two groups of children, nonetheless political narratives in relation to the media portrayals are present in the two cases. Hence, there is a commonality, where children are subjects in political narratives.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed if there are commonalities and differences in the portrayal of Scandinavian children whose parents fought for ISIS, and children affected by the war in BiH, in news articles from Scandinavia and the Balkans. Through a CDA I analysed how these children are portrayed in the selected news articles. Moreover, I discussed how the media narratives can underpin commonalities and differences in how the children are portrayed in Scandinavian and Balkan media. I conducted a CDA on 89 news articles and presented the dominant discourses that emerged from the analysis. I identified ten discourses surrounding children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters and ten discourses encompassing children during and after the war in BiH. The discourses are not distinctly defined, they rather mirror the prevailing narratives found within the media representation in the selected articles. The presentation of the discourses serves as an answer to how children in war are portrayed in Scandinavian and Balkan media. As the discourses are not clear-cut definitions and because there are multiple discourses surrounding both groups of children, the answer to how these children are portrayed is not straightforward, it rather lies in the variety of discourses.

The analysis uncovered differences and commonalities in the portrayal of children born to Scandinavian ISIS fighters and children affected by the war in BiH. The most prominent difference was the distinction between how the children are perceived as ‘security threats’ and ‘innocent victims’. Children of Scandinavian ISIS fighters are often associated with security risks, while children affected by the war in BiH are portrayed as innocent victims. This can be seen both through the emerging discourses, but also in the structure of arguments in the news articles, and how language is used about the children in the articles. A commonality that emerged was the narratives concerning hardships children endure in and after conflict. Even though the narrative focus in the portrayal between the two groups differed, both Scandinavian and Balkan media emphasised the physical and psychological consequences war has on children. Another commonality is how both groups of children are presented within political narratives in the discourses surrounding them. Again, the focus of these narratives is profoundly different, where children born to ISIS fighters are caught up in a political debate about their repatriation, and where the children’s suffering due to the war in BiH is viewed within political narratives of blame, propaganda and victimhood.

Appendix

Code	Newspaper	Author	Title	Date	Country/ Region	URL
N1	Dagbladet	Hultgreen, G	40 norske barn i Syria	13.04.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/40-norske-barn-i-syria/70967302
N2	Dagbladet	Suvatne, S.S	Vil hente IS-barn hjem til Norge	06.02.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/vil-hente-is-barn-hjem-til-norge/70747176
N3	Dagbladet	Hultgreen, G.	40 norske IS-barn i Syria	04.02.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/40-norske-is-barn-i-syria/70722627
N4	Dagbladet	Rønningen, M.	- Barn skal ikke lide for foreldrenes valg	16.02.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/barna-skal-ikke-lide-for-foreldrenes-valg/70776756
N5	Dagbladet	Suvatne, S. S. & Gilbrant, J.	Sylvi til IS-kvinnene: -Ingen sympati. Ingen tilgivelse	30.04.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/sylvi-til-is-kvinnene---ingen-sympati-ingen-tilgivelse/71027162
N6	Dagbladet	Sletten, K. O.	Mer enn ti barn født inn i IS av norske kvinner	08.12.16	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/mer-enn-ti-barn-fodt-inn-i-is-av-norske-kvinner/65686176
N7	NRK	Kolberg, M. & Stensvold, I.	Redd Barna: Ikke straff IS-barna for foreldrenes gjerninger	24.02.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.nrk.no/urix/redd-barna-ikke-straft-is-barna-for-foreldrenes-gjerninger-1.14444990
N8	NRK	Alayoubi, M. & Venum, E.	Frykter fremtidige terrorister:- Hent	25.02.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.nrk.no/urix/frykter-fremtidige-terrorister--hent-

			hjem deres kvinner og barn			hjem-deres-kvinner-og-barn-1.14446316
N9	NRK	Svendsen, C. & Alayoubi, M.	UD vil ikke oppnevne advokater til Syria-barna	09.02.22	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.nrk.no/norge/ud-vil-ikke-oppnevne-advokater-til-syria-barna-1.15848578
N10	NRK	Waalder, I. E. & Thommessen, J. K.	Norge henter hjem barn av IS-medlem:- Vi skal ta godt vare på barnet	22.11.21	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.nrk.no/urix/norge-henter-hjem-barn-av-is-medlem--vi-skal-ta-godt-vare-pa-barnet-1.15740516
N11	VG	Johansen, N.	Regjeringen holdt møter om barn av norske IS-kvinner	13.04.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/qLyRVL/regjeringen-holdt-moeter-om-barn-av-norske-is-kvinner
N12	VG	Lohne, L.	Flertallet mener barn av IS-foreldre bør få komme hjem	19.04.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/awOv4d/flertallet-mener-barn-av-is-foreldre-boer-faa-komme-hjem
N13	VG	Johansen, N.	Syria-barna: UD vil gi norsk gutt helsetilbud, men moren frykter sønnen blir tatt fra henne	29.08.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/3Jzw8q/syria-barna-ud-vil-gi-norsk-gutt-helsetilbud-moren-frykter-soennen-blir-tatt-fra-henne
N14	VG	Johansen, N. & Amundsen, I. H.	Erna Solberg til VG:- Barna skal ikke brukes for å komme til Norge	23.04.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/2GVXKl/erna-solberg-til-vg-barna-skal-ikke-brukes-for-aa-komme-til-norge
N15	VG	Johansen, N.	Norge henter hjem barn av IS-medlem fra Syria	22.11.21	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/47x71g/norge-henter-hjem-barn-av-is-medlem-fra-syria
N16	VG	Johansen, N. & Mikkelsen, M.	Et halvt år i IS-leirene: Barn ble	15.11.19	Scandinavia / Norway	https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/OpX9oO/et-halvt-aar-i-is-

			knivdrept som straff			leirene-barn-ble-knivdrept-som-straff
S1	Aftonbladet	Nordenberg, H.	Rapport: Barn från IS-lager återanpassar sig val	03.01.23	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/eJa4IM/rapport-barn-fran-is-lager-ateranpassar-sig-val
S2	Aftonbladet	Skogelin, M.	Barn stred för IS - vårdnadshavare häktas	23.09.21	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/1VvG3M/barn-stred-for-is--vardnadshavare-haktas
S3	Aftonbladet	Haglund, A.	IS-barnen behöver extra stöd	08.05.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/wPny9o/is-barnen-behoover-extra-stod
S4	Aftonbladet	Kerpner, J., Johansson, A., Sallinen, J. P., Treijs, E. & Sandelin, M.	Straffmyndiga vid 15 - men inga mindreåriga har terroråtalats	14.06.17	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/2WGql/straffmyndiga-vid-15--men-inga-minderariga-har-terroratalats
S5	Aftonbladet	Hjertén, L.	Femåring växte upp i fångläger: "Kan ha bevittnat mord och våldsbrott"	05.07.22	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/V9mrl1/femaring-vaxte-upp-i-fanglager-i-syrien-nu-ar-han-hemma-i-sverige
S6	Aftonbladet	TT	Sverige försöker få hem svenska IS-barn	03.10.20	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/eK113Q/sverige-forsoker-fa-hem-svenska-is-barn
S7	Expressen	Sjöshult, F.	L:s öppning: Ta hem svenska IS-barnen	06.03.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/l-s-oppning-ta-hem-svenska-is-barnen/
S8	Expressen	Ronge, J.	Stefan Löfven om barn till svenska IS-terroristerna	24.03.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/stefan-lofven-om-barn-till-svenska-is-terroristerna/

S9	Expressen	Holm, G.	Terrorexpertenes varning - för IS-återvändernas barn	18.02.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/terrorexpertens-varning-for-is-atervandernas-barn/
S10	Expressen	Sjölust, F.	38 orosanmälningar om IS-barn - men ingen klar rättspraxis	13.03.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.expressen.se/kronikor/fredrik-sjoshult/38-orosanmalningar-om-is-barn-men-ingen-klar-rattspraxis/
S11	Expressen	Rogsten, E. & Olsson, D.	Barnens nya vardag - när IS-anshängarna återvänder	28.02.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.expressen.se/gt/barnens-nya-vardag-nar-is-anshangarna-atervander/
S12	Dagens Nyheter	Letmark, P.	“Barn som inte tas hem kan utgöra en säkerhetsrisk längre fram”	28.02.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/barn-som-inte-tas-hem-kan-utgora-en-sakerhetsrisk-langre-fram/
S13	Dagens Nyheter	DNs ledarredaktion	Ledare: Regeringens brist på handlingskraft är livsfarlig	16.04.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.dn.se/ledare/regeringens-brist-pa-handlingskraft-ar-livsfarlig/
S14	Dagens Nyheter	Jakobson, H.	”Sverige har ett ansvar att hämta hem barnen i Syrien”	16.04.19	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/politik/sverige-har-ett-ansvar-att-hamta-hem-barnen-i-syrien/
S15	Dagens Nyheter	Wierup, L.	”Säpo informerar inte om barn till terrorister”	28.06.16	Scandinavia / Sweden	https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/sapo-informerar-inte-om-barn-till-terrorister/
D1	Jyllands-Posten	Leder	IS-krigernes børn	28.06.18	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/leder/ECE10721097/iskrigeres-boern/
D2	Jyllands-Posten	Haislund, J.	Minister tvivlede på sikkerheden i Syrien: Nu er børn med "dansk baggrund" hentet	12.06.19	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/EC/E11440252/minister-tvivlede-paa-sikkerheden-i-syrien-

[nu-er-boern-med-dansk-baggrund-hentet/](#)

D3	Jyllands-Posten	Politik	Partier vil hente danske børn i Syrien hjem	14.06.19	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE11445922/partier-vil-hente-danske-boern-i-syrien-hjem/
D4	Jyllands-Posten	Haislund, J.	Minister: Omkring 40 børn af danske statsborgere opholder sig Syrien	06.09.19	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/EC E11599990/minister-omkring-40-boern-af-danske-statsborgere-opholder-sig-syrien/
D5	Jyllands-Posten	Indland	Syrien-børn kan vende hjem med alvorlige psykiske problemer	19.05.21	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/EC E12989147/syrienboern-kan-vende-hjem-med-alvorlige-psykiske-problemer/
D6	Berlingske Tidende	Samfund	Flest danskere er imod at hente børn hjem fra lejre i Syrien	11.06.19	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/flest-danskere-er-imod-at-hente-boern-hjem-fra-lejre-i-syrien
D7	Berlingske Tidende	Aagaard, T.	IS-flygtningelejre og -fængsler er en tikkende bombe: Nu vil fangevogterne rydde op	02.10.19	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://www.berlingske.dk/internationalt/is-flygtningelejre-og-faengsler-er-en-tikkende-bombe-nu-vil
D8	Berlingske Tidende	Bjørnager, J. A.	Ekspert i indfødsret: Mere end 20 børn i de syriske Islamisk Stat-teltlejre har ret til danske pas	02.12.20	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/ekspert-i-indfoedsret-mere-end-20-boern-i-de-syriske-islamisk-stat
D9	Berlingske Tidende	Domino, S.	Regeringen opretter taskforce for børn i Syrien	30.03.21	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/regeringen-opretter-taskforce-for-boern-i-syrien

D10	Berlingske Tidende	Bjørnager, J. A.	14 danske børn og deres tre danske mødre er nu på vej til Danmark fra syrisk fangelejr	06.10.21	Scandinavia / Denmark	https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/14-danske-boern-og-deres-tre-danske-moedre-er-nu-paa-vej-til-danmark-fra
B1	Balkan Insight	Dobraca, N. M.	Bosnia's Forgotten Victims: The Lost Children of Gorazde	02.04.20	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/02/bosnia-s-forgotten-victims-the-lost-children-of-gorazde/
B2	Balkan Insight	Ahmetasevic, N.	Bosnia's Child Soldiers Abandoned by the State	21.05.14	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2014/05/21/bosnia-s-child-soldiers-abandoned-by-the-state/
B3	Balkan Insight	Džidić, D. & Dzidic, D.	Karadzic: Wounding of a Three-Year-Old Girl	28.09.10	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2010/09/28/karadzic-wounding-of-a-three-year-old-girl/
B4	Balkan Insight	Dizdarevic, E.	Bosnia Tries Wartime Fighter for Mistreating Boy	26.02.20	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/26/bosnia-tries-wartime-fighter-for-mistreating-boy/
B5	Balkan Insight	Brill, J.	Bosnian Exile Tells Child's Eye Tale of Fleeing to America	06.12.22	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2022/12/06/bosnian-exile-tells-childs-eye-tale-of-fleeing-to-america/
B6	Balkan Insight	Stojanovic, M.	Portraits of Bosnian 'Children of War' Exhibition in Belgrade	13.10.22	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/13/portraits-of-bosnian-children-of-war-exhibited-in-belgrade/
B7	Balkan Insight	Spaic, I.	Sarajevo Siege Mothers Remember Their Lost Children	22.12.17	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2017/12/22/sarajev-o-siege-mothers-remember-their-lost-children-12-21-2017/

B8	Balkan Insight	Brkanic, D.	465 Children Exhumed from Bosnia War Graves	25.09.17	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2017/09/25/465-children-exhumed-from-bosnia-war-graves-09-25-2017/
B9	Balkan Insight	Brkanic, D.	How a Bosnian Boy Survived a Firing Squad	14.08.17	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2017/08/14/how-a-bosnian-boy-survived-a-firing-squad-08-10-2017/
B10	Balkan Insight	Mackic, E.	Ratko Mladic's Gifts to Children: Chocolate and Lies	06.07.17	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2017/07/06/ratko-mladic-s-gifts-to-children-chocolate-and-lies-07-05-2017/
B11	Balkan Insight	Rose, E.	Bosnia's War Childhood Museum Opens in Sarajevo	30.01.17	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2017/01/30/bosnia-s-war-childhood-museum-finally-opens-01-30-2017/
B12	Balkan Insight	Džidić, D. & Dzidic, D.	Child Remains Exhumed in Banja Luka	10.04.12	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2012/04/10/remains-of-child-found-in-banja-luka/
B13	Balkan Insight	Juric, E. M.	War Children Publish Sarajevo Siege Stories	06.02.13	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2013/02/06/besieged-sarajevo-childhood-memories-book-presented/
B14	Balkan Insight	BIRN	Pensioners and Children Found in Bosnia War Graves	04.04.13	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2013/04/04/third-of-victims-older-than-60-says-expert/
B15	Balkan Insight	Milekic, S., Ucanbarlic, S. & Nikolic, I.	Children's Killers in Refugee Bombing Go Unpunished	07.08.15	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2015/08/07/childrens-killers-in-refugee-bombing-go-unpunished-08-06-2015/

B16	Balkan Insight	Dzinic, D. Panic, K.	'White Ribbon Day' Commemorates Killed Bosnian Children	31.05.16	Balkan / Regional	https://balkaninsight.com/2016/05/31/white-ribbon-day-commemorates-killed-bosnian-children-05-31-2016/
B17	Al Jazeera	Gadoz, M.	From child of Bosnian war to jiu-jitsu world champion	18.05.18	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/5/18/from-child-of-bosnian-war-to-jiu-jitsu-world-champion
B18	Al Jazeera	Milisic, A.	'Growing up during the Bosnian War made me a journalist'	14.12.20	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/12/14/reporters-notebook-growing-up-during-war-made-me-a-journalist
B19	Al Jazeera	Jan, M.	Sarajevo: Memories of war	14.12.15	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/12/14/sarajevo-memories-of-war
B20	Al Jazeera	Memišević, E.	Višegrad's rape camps: Denial and erasure	17.10.20	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/10/17/visegrads-rape-camps-denial-and-erasure
B21	Al Jazeera	News	Bosnian Muslim mass grave exhumed	21.05.04	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2004/5/21/bosnian-muslim-mass-grave-exhumed
B22	Al Jazeera	Gadzo, M.	'A camera does not lie': Documenting besieged Sarajevo	03.05.20	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/5/3/a-camera-doesnt-lie-documenting-besieged-sarajevo
B23	Al Jazeera	News	Bosnian war crimes suspect arrested	23.05.03	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2003/8/23/bosnian-war-crimes-suspects-arrested

B24	Al Jazeera	News	Bosnians to mark Srebrenica genocide	09.07.05	Balkan / Regional	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/7/9/bosnians-to-mark-srebrenica-genocide
F1	Dnevni avaz	H. I. J	Tužna godišnjica masakra na Alipašinom Polju: Djeca ubijena dok su se sankala	22.01.23	BiH / Federation	https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/802975/tuzna-godisnjica-masakra-na-alipasinom-polju-djeca-ubijena-dok-su-se-sankala
F2	Dnevni avaz	Bajramovic, A.	Alen Muhić ostavljen jer je plod silovanja, danas želi upoznati biološke roditelje	02.11.14	BiH / Federation	https://avaz.ba/vijesti/teme/144012/alen-muhic-ostavljen-je-plod-silovanja-danas-zeli-upoznati-bioloske-roditelje
F3	Dnevni avaz	Muracevic, E.	GODIŠNJICA POGIBIJE DJECE SA KOBILJE GLAVE Ni trešnje nisu dali brati	03.07.15	BiH / Federation	https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/185359/godisnjica-pogibije-djeca-sa-kobilje-glave-ni-tresnje-nisu-dali-brati#google_vignette
F4	Dnevni avaz	Bajramovic, A.	HISTORIJA Tokom opsade Goražda ubijeno i ranjeno 550 djece	05.04.23	BiH / Federation	https://avaz.ba/vijesti/teme/171889/historija-tokom-opsade-gorazda-ubijeno-i-ranjeno-550-djeca?amp=1#google_vignette
F5	Dnevni avaz	Smajlovic, P. S.	Bratunac: U mezare spuštene žrtve, među njima i dječak Salmir (9), koji je spaljen s majkom i nanom	12.05.22	BiH / Federation	https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/741863/bratunac-u-mezare-spustene-zrtve-medu-njima-i-djecak-salmir-9-koji-je-spaljen-s-majkom-i-nanom?komentari=&w_start=%7Bseek_to_second_number%7D
F6	Dnevni avaz	E. M.	Pronađena tijela žene i djeteta od nekoliko mjeseci	16.08.05	BiH / Federation	http://www.infobiro.ba/article/61643

F7	Oslobodenje	M.S.S	Grabovica: Svako deseto dijete je ubijeno iz snajpera, ubistva djece su bila sistematska	06.04.23	BiH / Federation	https://okanal.oslobodjenje.ba/okanal/vijesti/grabovica-ubistva-djece-su-bila-sistematska-a-svako-deseto-dijete-je-ubijeno-iz-snajpera-850377
F8	Oslobodenje	Sahinpasic, N.	Ubijena djeca Sarajeva sad su žrtve propagande: Glavni krivac je bh. pravosuđe	11.08.23	BiH / Federation	https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/ubijena-djeca-sarajeva-sad-su-zrtve-propagande-glavni-krivac-je-bh-pravosude-883521
F9	Oslobodenje	Oslobodenje Portal	Predsjednik Udruženja roditelja ubijene djece opkoljenog Sarajeva: Licitiraju brojem ubijene djece, zašto ne dignu glas da se optuže zločinci	12.05.22	BiH / Federation	https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/predsjednik-udruzenja-roditelja-ubijene-djece-opkoljenog-sarajeva-licitiraju-brojem-ubijene-djece-zasto-ne-dignu-glas-da-se-optuze-zlocinci-758510
F10	Oslobodenje	Malisevic, J.	Granata prekinula dječiju igru: "I nakon 27 godina od završetka rata nastavljena je agresija na našu mladost drugim sredstvima"	20.09.22	BiH / Federation	https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/sarajevo/granata-prekinula-djeciju-igru-i-nakon-27-godina-od-zavrsetka-rata-nastavljena-je-agresija-na-nasu-mladost-drugim-sredstvima-789449
F11	Oslobodenje	Price, Z.	“Ovo je za mamu” - Dirljiva priča sestara iz Sarajeva: Iz rata nose teške rane	01.10.23	BiH / Federation	https://mojabih.oslobodjenje.ba/mb/zivotne-price/ovo-je-za-mamu-dirljiva-prica-sestara-iz-sarajeva-iz-rata-nose-teske-rane-896363

F12	Oslobodenje	Oslobodenje Portal	Dječije uspomene kao svjedočanstva	11.02.17	BiH / Federation	https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/magazin/kultura/djecije-uspomene-ka0-svjedocanstva
RS1	Nezavisne Novine	A.F.P	PSIHIČKE TRAUME kod 85.000 mališana	21.05.05	BiH / Republika Srpska	http://www.infobiro.ba/article/43421
RS2	Nezavisne Novine	Dra, R.	Prijateljstvo dvije djevojčice 30 godina nakon rata jače nego ikada	05.10.23	BiH / Republika Srpska	.https://www.nezavisne.com/zivot-stil/zivot/Prijateljstvo-dvije-djevojci0e-30-godina-nakon-rata-jace-nego-ikada/792879
RS3	Nezavisne Novine	Velic, S.	Postavljena imena ubijene djece	09.05.10	BiH / Republika Srpska	https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/gradovi/Postavljena-imena-ubijene-djece/59568
RS4	Nezavisne Novine	Agencije	Knjiga Zločini nad djecom Sarajeva u opsadi predstavljena u Beogradu	06.04.12	BiH / Republika Srpska	https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Knjiga-Zlocini-nad-djecom-Sarajeva-u-opsadi-predstavljena-u-Beogradu/135882
RS5	Nezavisne Novine	Klix.ba	Više od 50 posto djece iz BiH u Švedskoj ima psihičke probleme	25.19.13	BiH / Republika Srpska	https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/drustvo/Vise-od-50-posto-djece-iz-BiH-u-Svedskoj-ima-psihi0e-probleme/215364
RS6	Nezavisne Novine	Rizvanovic. L.	Hajka na spomenik	09.02.09	BiH / Republika Srpska	https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/gradovi/Hajka-na-spomenik/36716
RS7	Glas Srpske	Srna	Iz snajpera ubijali srpsku djecu po Grbavici	11.03.18	BiH / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/novosti/vijesti_dana/iz-snajpera-ubijali-srpsku-djecu-po-grbavici/257222

RS8	Glas Srpske	Srna	Из штампе изашла монографија “Дјеца жртве рата 1991-1995”	20.07.22	БиХ / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/cir/drustvo/vijesti/iz-stampe-izasl-monografija-djeca-zrtve-rata-1991-1995/425350
RS9	Glas Srpske	Vlaisavljevic, S.	Мајке не мрзе	10.07.09	БиХ / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/komentar/kolumne/majke-ne-mrze/24773
RS10	Glas Srpske	Симић, В. К.	Из школе на браник отаџбине: Споменко и Игор, дјеца хероји Одбрамбено-отаџбинског рата	01.08.22	БиХ / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/cir/novosti/vijesti_dana/iz-skole-na-branik-otadzbine-spomenko-i-igor-djeca-heroji-odbrambeno-otadzbinskog-rata/427115
RS11	Glas Srpske	Симић, В. К.	Шта су скривили Вишња, Аца, Раша...: Рат у црно завио многе породице	30.07.22	БиХ / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/cir/novosti/vijesti_dana/sta-su-skrivili-visnja-aca-rasa-rat-u-crno-zavio-mnoge-porodice/426891
RS12	Glas Srpske	Simic, V. K.	Vrištala je "mama, mama", ali nisam joj mogla pomoći: Potresno svjedočenje o ubistvu male Mirjane	27.07.22	БиХ / Republika Srpska	https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/novosti/vijesti_dana/vristala-je-mama-mama-ali-nisam-joj-mogla-pomoci-potresno-svjedocenje-o-ubistvu-male-mirjane/426371

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