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**TRANSITIONAL JOURNALISM AS A  
PRACTICE IN THE BALKANS  
MEDIA COVERAGE ANALYSIS OF THE  
KOSOVO-SERBIA CONFLICT**

*Master Thesis*

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## **Bibliographic note**

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## **Abstract**

Serbia and Kosovo have been under conflict since the beginning of the 1998-99 Kosovo war, when Serbia carried out ethnic cleansing against Kosovo-Albanians, leaving over 12,000 dead and almost a million displaced. Since then, Kosovo has declared itself independent since 2008, however, Serbia refuses to recognize its breakaway province. In the past 25 years, the media in Kosovo has undertaken a role that is different from that of a traditional 'Western' journalist.' Journalists undergo efforts to contribute further to the de-escalation of the conflict and deliver justice to the victims. Transitional journalism (TJ), as a newly emerging research agenda in the Western Balkans, seeks to uncover how media has affected, and been affected, by the ethnic lines and scars stemming from the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s, such as in Kosovo. Transitional journalism, as a product of weak institutions and failure to deliver justice, is further identified empirically in this dissertation, through a mixed-method approach featuring transitional journalism frames and interviews with Kosovo journalists.

## **Keywords**

Framing Theory; Kosovo; Post-communist; Post-conflict; Reconstruction Interview; Serbia; Transitional Journalism; Western Balkans; Yugoslavia.

## **Abstrakt**

Srbsko a Kosovo jsou v konfliktu od začátku kosovské války v letech 1998-99, kdy Srbsko provádělo etnické čistky proti kosovským Albáncům, které si vyžádaly přes 12 000 mrtvých a téměř milion vysídlených osob. Od té doby se Kosovo od roku 2008 prohlásilo za nezávislé, Srbsko však odmítá svou odtrženou provincii uznat. V uplynulých 25 letech převzala média v Kosovu jinou roli než tradiční "západní" novináři". Novináři podstupují úsilí, aby dále přispěli k deeskalaci konfliktu a poskytli spravedlnost obětem. Transitional journalism (TJ), jako nově vznikající výzkumná agenda na západním Balkáně, se snaží odhalit, jak média ovlivnily a byly ovlivněny etnickými liniemi a jizvami plynoucími z jugoslávských válek v 90. letech, například v Kosovu. Přechodná žurnalistika jako produkt slabých institucí a selhání spravedlnosti je v této disertační práci dále empiricky identifikována prostřednictvím smíšeného metodického přístupu zahrnujícího rámce přechodné žurnalistiky a rozhovory s kosovskými novináři.

## **Klíčová slova**

Teorie rámcování; Kosovo; postkomunistické; postkonfliktní; rekonstrukční rozhovor; Srbsko; přechodná žurnalistika; západní Balkán; Jugoslávie.

**Range of thesis:** 114 pages and 205,901 characters

## **Declaration of Authorship**

- 1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.**
- 2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.**
- 3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.**
- 4. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.**

Prague, 31 July 2023

Jakob Weizman

## **Acknowledgments**

To my mother, Deborah, who has been my rock throughout my entire life, and always supported me in everything I did.

To my father, Leif, for always encouraging me to aspire to newer levels of success and always putting us first.

To my family in Colombia and Denmark, thank you for giving me a sense of purpose and identity.

To my friends in the United States, I'm grateful to have watched us all grow up into the people we are today.

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To Eric, for being the most helpful friend ever and making sure my thesis was even possible.

To Mundus family and all my friends I've gained from it, it's been one amazing ride these past two years. So proud of all we've been through and accomplished.  
Lastly, to Kosovo, for giving me a home and a place to feel like I belong.

**Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK**  
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**Thesis title in English:** Transitional Journalism as a Practice in the Balkans: Media coverage analysis of the Kosovo license plate dispute

**Expected date of submission (SS, September, 2022-23)**

**Main research question (max. 250 characters):**

To what extent are transitional journalism practices used amongst Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serbian journalists in the Kosovo license plate dispute?

**Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):**

Transitional journalism is a new field of research within journalism studies developed and identified by Dr. Kenneth Andresen, where the case of the Western Balkans and its journalistic practices was used to support and affirm the model he had developed for transitional journalism. The post-conflict transformation, power structures, political instability, and national allegiance have built a strong case for the concept, produced through a specific geopolitical context within the Western Balkans. The lack of trust in governmental institutions and ethnic unrest leads to a combination of practices that in turn make up the term 'transitional journalism,' as journalists are hoping to accelerate their country's path transitioning into a democratic society by taking on a more proactive role in delivering transitional justice.

Furthermore, Andresen has concluded that "transitional journalism is empirically identifiable in the views of the Kosovo news media," (Andresen, et al. 2021). By using the most recent case of conflict in Kosovo, thus being the license plate scandal and adopting a mixed-method approach to the methodology, the research on this topic can be propelled in order to highlight further the use of transitional journalism in Kosovo. In both 2021 and 2022, the Kosovo government, citing reciprocity, issued a decree requiring the removal of Serbian license plates, replaced by Kosovo license plates upon entering Kosovo. Following the issuance, waves of protests from Kosovo Serbs and ethnic unrest between Serbians and Albanian ethnicities followed, forcing the international community to urge both Kosovo and Serbia governments to find a solution. Assessing the media's role in covering this conflict can be utilized as an indicator of transitional journalism.

**Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters):**

The study 'New Roles for Media in Western Balkans,' published in 2017, media academic Kenneth Andresen, alongside Abit Hoxha and Jonila Godole, identified and defined the role of transitional journalism in the Western Balkans region. It is renowned for introducing the field of 'transitional journalism,' setting the groundwork for the field to continue being developed in the future through further inquiry. In the International Journal of Transitional Justice, there was a case study conducted on Kosovo by Andresen and Hoxha, over the period 2018-2020 using qualitative research via semi-structured interviews with 30 journalists, both Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serbian, which will be used to identify the practices that Kosovar journalists have adopted in covering ethnic unrest.

Transitional journalism is a "new approach to identify media interventions" (Andresen, et al. 2017) and clearly defines journalistic roles in countries under transitional periods, taking on a "broader" role than journalists in Western societies would. It incorporates components from both peace and war journalism, and factors pertaining to journalists undertaking the role of delivering transitional justice in Western Balkan countries undergoing post-conflict transformation. By examining a current case study in Kosovo media, the development of transitional journalism can be revealed further, strengthening Andresen's argument for a new field of research within journalism studies. Through this framework I will hypothesize that:

H1) Transitional journalism frames were largely dominant in Kosovo media during the license plate conflict

H2) Kosovar journalists took on a more active role than that of a traditional journalist during the conflict to support the development of transition in Kosovo

**Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):**

Identifying the practice of transitional journalism in the case of Kosovo during the license plate conflict can be utilized through a mixed-method approach to the methodology. Studies that have been conducted on transitional journalism have either used qualitative or quantitative methods, however, have not used both simultaneously in any given study. According to a paper addressing the hierarchy of influence in transitional journalism in Serbia, "focusing on single cases will deepen the view into the complex nexus of forces that affect the performance of journalists," (Milojevic, Krstic 2018) thus recognizing the importance of selecting a single case study that can indeed highlight the practices mentioned above.

Through the quantitative approach, I will use the method of framing analysis, specifically inductive coding in three types of online media portals present in Kosovo: International, Serbian-language, and Albanian language. This method will allow me to recognize the transitional journalism frames used in the reporting on the conflict located within each of the articles selected from the media portals that make up the three types referenced. According to Lecheler and Vresse (2019), An inductive approach produces rich knowledge about the framing of the issue at hand, since there is not enough concrete information or research done on transitional journalism in order to generate a deductive coding framework. Secondly, the qualitative method will incorporate the interview technique, specifically the 'reconstruction' interview as coined by Zvi Reich (2014), where the interviewer goes through selected articles written by the interviewee, or the journalist, in an attempt to understand their news production process and how they selectively created each specific article.

**Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):**

Regarding the quantitative method, articles will be selected from the time period July 21, 2022- April 21 2023. The justification for this time period is due to the escalation of tensions at the border due to Kosovo Serb protests in the end of July 2022, which led to further postponement of the implementation regarding license plate removal, which then came into effect September 1. The reason for the selection of a date in the future is due to Kurti stating that full application of the mandate will begin on April 21, 2023, whereas the period in between is seen as a 'transitory' period for the requirement to come into effect. It is crucial to examine how transitional journalism seeks to play an active role in the implementation of Kosovo license plates in the North of Kosovo, where mostly Kosovo Serbs inhabit. The conflict is supposedly on a trajectory set for escalation, so it will be crucial to examine this time period. Two media portals will be selected from each of the three types of Kosovo media mentioned, thus being:

International: Balkan Insight, Radio Free Europe

Albanian language: Kallxo, Gazeta Express

Serbian language: Kosovo Online, Kossev

Every 30 days from July 21, 2022 up until April 21, 2023, two articles will be selected from each media portal and analyzed via framing analysis and inductive coding, to assess and determine how and whether it fits under the transitional journalism frame. These two articles selected each month will be determined based on the length of the piece, as short, superficial articles are very common in Kosovo media rendering it unable to select a process that randomizes the selection of articles. Instead, the rationale for the selection of each article will be introduced and justified. Each article selected must cover the topic of the license plate dispute. Furthermore, after the quantitative framing analysis is complete, the journalists that wrote the pieces analyzed will be contacted for an interview using the 'reconstruction' interview process. Not all pieces written by the journalists will be used through the interview process, however, two journalists will be selected from each online media portal to ascertain the best results, along with two or three samples of their work that had been analyzed in the quantitative method. In this qualitative method, the results will be garnered and assessed to understand how the articles were produced, and the reasoning behind the course of action in each article. Afterward, the findings from the mixed method approach will in turn determine to what extent transitional journalism practices are used in Kosovo under a specific context, thus being the license plate dispute.

**Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):**

- 1. Abstract**
- 2. Introduction**
- 3. Literature Review**
- 4. Theoretical Framework**
  - 3.1. Transitional Journalism- explanation of transitional journalism as a concept and its relevance to the Kosovo/Balkan unique context
  - 3.2 Kosovo-Serbia context- providing a full-fledged understanding and comprehension of the

conflict through the use of literature that connects with the transitional journalism model  
3.3 Transitology- outline of the study of transitology and how it also connects within the transitional journalism framework

5. **Methodology**

5.1 Framing analysis- outline and description of the quantitative method, using framing theory and referenced literature

5.2 Reconstruction interviews- outline, and description of the qualitative method using literature that previously used this method

6. **Results and Analysis**

7. **Limitations**

8. **Conclusion**

9. **Bibliography**

**Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):**

**Sweeney, James A, Kenneth Andresen, and Abit Hoxha. "Transitional Justice and Transitional Journalism: Case-Study on Kosovo." *The international journal of transitional justice* 14.3 (2021): 483–503. Web.**

This case study builds off Andresen's 2017 findings and declaration of the new approach known as transitional journalism, using Kosovo as a case study. It showcases and reveals how Kosovo journalists, through qualitative research, employ transitional journalistic practises. It intersects the relationship between transitional journalism and transitional justice, to provide solution and to also bring justice to the victims.

**Andresen, Kenneth, Abit Hoxha, and Jonila Godole. "New Roles for Media in the Western Balkans: A Study of Transitional Journalism." *Journalism studies (London, England)* 18.5 (2017): 614–628. Web.**

This research was Andresen's first introduction to the concept of transitional journalism, after revealing the results from the Worlds of Journalism study where over a thousand journalists were interviewed via questionnaire in 4 Western Balkan countries. This literature is groundbreaking as it creates the first model for what exactly is transitional journalism and how it is practised under the context of Western Balkan transitional justice and democratic transformation.

**Milojević, Ana, and Aleksandra Krstić. "Hierarchy of Influences on Transitional Journalism – Corrupting Relationships Between Political, Economic and Media Elites." *European journal of communication (London)* 33.1 (2018): 37–56. Web.**

Milojevic and Krstic build upon Andresen's newfound model by arguing that Serbia can be utilized as a strong case for highlighting the transitional roles that journalists play that are different from those of Western, traditional journalism due to lack of trust in their governments and its transitional justice processes. By incorporating the hierarchy of influences model and transitional journalism, the paper examines and assesses the responsibilities journalists assume due to the nature of their work

environment and socio-political context, paramount to the influences exerted on them that affect their perceptions of their roles.

**Gonen, Yonatan, and Abit Hoxha. "Interactions Between Journalists Located in Different Sides of a Conflict: A Comparative Study of Two Conflict Zones." *Journalism studies* (London, England) 20.16 (2019): 2495–2512. Web.**

This study is crucial to understanding how Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serbian journalists view their relationships between each other and how they collaborate with one another amidst ethnic conflict between the two sides. Notions of self-censorship, ethnic lines, professional interactions, source gathering are all in play here that deepen the understanding of how a transitional journalist view their role in the post-conflict sphere, specifically within the transitional justice transformation.

**Reich, Zvi. "Islands of Divergence in a Stream of Convergence: Comparing the News Practices of Male and Female Journalists in Israel." *Journalism studies* (London, England) 15.1 (2014): 64–81. Web.**

While Reich did in fact introduce this concept of reconstruction interviews in 2009, I believe that this paper dives deeper into the use of the specific interview structure. By disseminating and dissecting the works of both male and female journalists in Israel, his paper creates an understanding for readers of the news production process, revealing that based on gender, they obtain news differently, highlighting the struggles that female journalists face by utilizing the reconstruction interview process. Components such as time pressure, gender discrimination, and news beat overload were uncovered through this qualitative method.

**Lecheler, Sophie, and Claes H. de Vreese. *News Framing Effects*. First edition. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge, 2018. Print.**

Lecheler and Vreese's book on framing theory provides a detailed and descriptive overview of how those involved in journalism studies can use framing analysis to gain results from their quantitative methods. Justification for processes involving inductive coding can be found in this book in order to ascertain a rationale for the use of framing analysis as a method of quantitative research.

**Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):**

SEMENOV, Andrej. *Institution Building in Post-Conflict Areas: The Quest for Legitimate Institutions in Kosovo*. Praha, 2020. Dizertační práce. Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra politologie. Vedoucí práce Salamon, Janusz.

PROCHÁZKA, Karel. *The European Union and the adoption of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo: the role of material interests and shared ideas*. Praha, 2018. Diplomová práce. Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra mezinárodních vztahů. Vedoucí práce Karlas, Jan.

DOSTÁL, Jan. *Explaining the Kosovo's recognition and its withdrawal*. Praha, 2021. Diplomová práce.

Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra mezinárodních vztahů. Vedoucí práce Karlas, Jan.

CONYERS, Heather. Cultural Policy Amidst Disputed Memory: Cultural Sector Impacts in Kosovo and Nagorno-Karabakh. Praha, 2022. Diplomová práce. Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra ruských a východoevropských studií. Vedoucí práce Brisku, Adrian

**Date / Signature of the student:**

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<b>THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:</b>	
I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.	
I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.	
Dr. Adrian Brisku	
Surname and name of the supervisor	Date / Signature of the supervisor
Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:	
Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:	

The research proposal has to be printed, signed and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, **by November 15, 2021**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Mgr. Sandra Štefaniková. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

**RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.**

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# 1 Introduction

Identifying and observing journalistic practices is a common approach in journalism studies. While there are certain practices such as being the ‘observer’ or the ‘watchdog’ are already established, it is important to understand that there are constantly new journalistic practices emerging out of different regions in the world. These newfound practices are born out of historical events such as war, genocide, natural disasters, famine, and other historical events throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. During the 1990s, the failed socialist state of Yugoslavia broke up into several different states after almost a decade of bloody conflict between ethnic groups. The blood spilled until NATO decided to intervene, carrying out a series of airstrikes and bombings against what was left of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

As a result, the disputed territory of Kosovo was placed under UN administration, led on the ground by KFOR (Kosovo Force), a NATO-led peacekeeping force that was established to maintain peace in the tense post-conflict environment, which included both ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbians that had become split apart by the heavy fighting and genocide carried out by Serbia against the Albanians during the 1998-99 Kosovo War.

Serbia’s claim to Kosovo’s territory has been at the forefront of international debate for decades due to historical, political, and religious interests that have endangered the upkeep of stability in the former Serbian province, especially after Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008. From its act of self-determination until now, close to half of the world’s UN member states have recognized Kosovo’s sovereignty, whereas Serbia continually maintains that the territory remains de-jure a part of Serbia despite over 90% of its population being ethnically Albanian. Through the EU-facilitated Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, the international community, mostly the Western countries, seek to enact a normalization of relations between the two entities that assures stability in the region; however, Serbia and its president Aleksandar Vučić continue to deny recognition of Kosovo as a sovereign state.

As a result of this dispute, though Kosovo is considered a ‘post-conflict’ environment, many conflict situations arise out of the tension between the two states.

Violent protests and attacks on journalists occurred in 2023, resulting in some of the worst post-conflict violence Kosovo has seen since the war. Therefore, it is possible to consider the Kosovo-Serbia conflict as an ongoing one, regardless of the war ending in 1999.

The media assumes its role in monitoring the conflict and its new state's capabilities in developing its democracy and establishing institutions that carry out legal, judicial, and executive mechanisms that deliver substantial change for a democracy currently in transition. In turn, it connects further to Kosovo's media landscape in regards to how the media as a 'fourth institution' outside of the aforementioned three (legal, judicial, and executive), finds itself playing a wider role in the scope of transitional justice and transitional democracy, as Kosovo attempts to move past its conflict-ridden past into the future of a young democratic state in Western Balkans and Europe as whole. Due to the transition period in a post-conflict environment, the level of trust in institutional capacity and rule of law in Kosovo continues to be very low as a result of obstacles caused by challenges to its sovereignty, ethnic tension, unstable government, and corruption. Kosovo's "dramatic history comprising elements of ethnic conflict, war, and international intervention is a particularly interesting place to study the development of journalism organization and practice." (Andresen, 2015, p. 3)

Therefore, the case of Kosovo under the scope of journalism studies allows for a valuable examination of its media landscape, specifically researching and measuring how journalists act under such a context in connection to the ongoing tension with Serbia that will be later highlighted and assessed through a certain period of media coverage. Understanding the media's role in a post-conflict environment through the lens of Kosovo will contribute immensely to the perception of how journalists view themselves in such environments.

In the dissertation, the following research questions are as follows:

**To what extent are TJ practices used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?**

**To what extent are TJ frames used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?**

Firstly, the literature review and theoretical framework goes further into detail regarding what transitional journalism is, and how it can be identifiable in the case of Kosovo's mediascape. Following this, the methodology employs a mixed-method approach of both quantitative and qualitative to empirically examine whether transitional journalism is practiced in Kosovo. In the final chapters, a discussion regarding the results of the research, suggestions for further research and final remarks are attached to the dissertation.

## 2. Literature and Theory

This chapter is structured into two subchapters: the literature review and the theoretical framework. The literature review subchapter comprises three sections that are integral to the comprehensive analysis. The first section, “Defining Journalistic Practices,” expounds upon the foundational concepts and principles that underpin journalistic endeavors. The second section, “Transitional Journalism as a Practice in Western Balkans,” explores the significance and characteristics of transitional journalism within the context of the Western Balkan region. The third section, “Media Landscape in Kosovo,” delves into the intricate media ecosystem of the country, providing contextual insights essential for our subsequent theoretical exploration. Subsequently, in the theoretical framework, the concept of Transitional Journalism is examined, with a specific focus on its application and implications within the unique socio-political context of Kosovo. This academic endeavor aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and shed light on the transformative role of journalism in a transitioning society.

### 2.1 Literature Review

**In fact, objectivity has been treated as an American or Western journalism construct, the universalization of which coalesces with Western imperial interests and values (Chalaby, 1996; Righter, 1978). In certain circumstances, this has led to local/regional conceptualizations of journalism practice such as ‘Afriethics’ (Kasoma, 1996) or ‘Asian values’ (Loo, 2019). (Workneh, 2022, pp- 327-328)**

#### 2.1.1 Defining Journalistic Practices

The role of media in countries undergoing post-conflict and post-communist transformation has continuously played a crucial role in the field of journalism studies, particularly honing itself into a distinctive role that strays away from the traditional Western standard practice of modern journalism. Understanding the repercussions of the past on present-day reporting and what consequences its media coverage can bring for

the future is imperative to understanding the mediascape of certain regions devastated by conflicts such as ethnic violence and genocide. The effect that war brings upon journalists has deeply impacted their methods and practices in the newsroom and on-the-field reporting in regard to a variety of identifiable traits in their work, such as bias, framing, narratives, source-selection, and solution-oriented reporting. A combinatory approach of historical studies pertaining to journalism, along with occupational analysis of current journalistic roles, is crucial to uncovering the practices of any given region that falls under the categorization of a post-conflict or post-communist environment, or in some cases, both.

Centralizing this scope down to narrower margins regarding the contextualization of a given media environment would first be necessary to consider the Eastern European model of journalism that derived from the Soviet period. Historical studies in journalism combined the Eastern European model under that of the communist era, blurring the lines of what is understood as a common practice surrounding journalists in the region. “This model is considered obsolete today, and researchers such as Hallin and Mancini (2004) have made new models or three media systems for Europe and a comprehensive study of media systems beyond the Western world.” (Andresen, 2015, p. 20) The ongoing transitioning of post-communist societies into functioning democracies made it significant for researchers to identify how the norms and standards of journalistic practices would evolve alongside these societal, political, and economic changes that were unfolding at the turn of the 21st century. The reshaping of borders, institutions, political systems, and economic structures demanded a reinvention of how journalists would align themselves in terms of their ever-changing role in society and determining the path of their country in terms of state-building efforts and post-conflict transformation.

There is already widespread acknowledgment among scholars examining and investigating journalistic practices in Eastern Europe, that media “in Eastern Europe did not become ‘free and independent’ even though communism was abandoned.” (Andresen, 2015, p. 11). Firstly, it is vital to realize that in order to identify what is considered to be ‘free and independent’ in mediascapes. One must first revert to the studies that made an effort to define professional and ‘correct’ journalism, which directs the primary component of the literature towards summarizing the concepts involved in

the ‘Western’ model of journalism that evidently serves as a comparison to other practices of journalism in different parts of the world. By pinpointing relevant theory and literature that is attached to the domineering ideas of Western practices, it can be better understood under the relevant theoretical framework of TJ and how various consequences of history, violence, ethnicity, religion, and other factors can dictate the role in which media undertakes in its own society or specific country.

Eide (2007, p. 24) claims that “journalism has become an ideology in itself.” Furthermore, the journalist is seen as the middle ground between the power and the people, as the “journalists’ job is to serve the people and challenge the powerful.” (Petersson, 1994, in Eide, 2007, p. 23). Moreover, journalists in Eide’s (2007) description of the ideology are meant to act as “intermediators” and “interpreters” (p.23) between the ruling elite and the ordinary citizen. This incorporates clearly the responsibility of a professionally-mannered journalist that transcends between the lines of the powerful and powerless, meaning its role as a watchful eye stands between the people and the government, as their roles are mostly associated with being an “objective reporter,” “balanced reporter,” “public interest protection” and “watchdog” which are “familiar to journalists in the West” (Andresen et al., 2017, p. 618).

There is more of a necessity in Western practices to be “detached and independent” (Andresen et al. 2017, p. 618). Therefore, journalists are meant to report on what they are covering from an unbiased perspective and not involve their own motives or bias into the story. The Western world views journalism as a major factor in maintaining democracy and a system of checks and balances, attaching itself to a ‘fourth’ role outside of the three major branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial. “This model assumes that the news media are independent of the state and that journalists are mostly autonomous agents who represent the people” (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 4). This idea furthers the detached observer role in which a Western journalist must undertake, moreso in which they view as the normative or professional standard that should apply to journalistic practices across the world, at the bare minimum. Taking into account the relevant literature dictating what is meant to be ‘proper’ journalism under a Western context, it is imperative to address that the majority of research and evaluation done by scholars in the field of journalism studies comes

mostly from the United States and Europe, dictating the scope of journalism theory and practice that is derived from the literature review.

Though the chosen literature does not acknowledge any singular method of journalistic practice as idealistic due to the nature of external factors (conflict, corruption, underdevelopment) in any given country's mediascape, it is crucial to highlight what tends to drive the defining characteristics of journalistic standards. "For instance, an analysis of comparative journalism research published between 2000 and 2015 in journals listed by ISI Journal Citation Reports found that eight of ten articles were exclusively authored by scholars based at institutions in the United States and Europe" (Hanusch & Vos, 2019 in Hanitzsch, et al., 2019, p. 5). While it is clearly touched upon in academic literature that the West more or less establishes the norm, it is of paramount importance to note that there is becoming an exceedingly evident phenomenon in the field that recognizes the validity of practices being contingent on the aforementioned external factors. Journalists outside the Western hemisphere have faced the challenges of "the cultural, political, economic and ideological realities that prevent them from applying what they learned in relation to doing journalism the Western way" (Bebawi & Onilov, 2020, p. 3). Consequently, it is evermore pivotal to continue to unfold journalism practices that are devoid of the so-called 'Western way.' This dominance of the West over journalistic research has undoubtedly surpassed its limit, given that "consequently, journalistic cultures in some, mostly developing and transitional, countries are sometimes portrayed as needing to "catch up" with the norms and practices celebrated by the West." (Golding, 1977, p. 292, in Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 6). There is a demand to redefine what journalism should be, given that it is not a universal concept as Western scholars have indirectly led us to believe. This is the basis of the literature utilized for the thesis and its theoretical framework, outlining an effort to properly emphasize what constitutes the 'professional' standards of journalism and how the narrative is changing within journalism studies to diverge these norms into a lesser-universal framework that is more influenced by local factors on the ground in each covered mediascape.

The dilemma that arises out of preserving certain principles for news reporting is that international actors tend to ostracize and criticize countries and their media system for failing to uphold an ideal standard of press freedom. These ideals are typically

rooted in Western democracies meant to be maintained throughout a global setting. “This dominance has led to the normalization of the Western journalism paradigm, to which journalistic cultures outside the Western core are fitted in normative, conceptual, and empirical terms” (Hanitzsch et al. 2019, p. 8). What fails to be considered under these implications is that the historical, political, ethnic, and ideological contexts that affect the very nature of these countries impact how journalists view their roles in their own societies. Whether or not journalists are depicted as an institution is examined by the numerous factors that go into fostering or denying press freedom for journalists, such as whether it is abused by political parties for propaganda, lack of transparent media ownership, censorship, media bans, societal conditions, international involvement and other corresponding factors that play a role in shaping a country or region’s mediascape.

As mentioned before, the environments in post-communist and post-conflict countries will be the main focus of this study, which directly label itself as a developing and transitional country in which journalists are “often expected to act in the capacity of nation builders, partners of the government, and agents of empowerment” (Romano, 2005, in Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 164). In the WJS Chapter 7’s ‘Journalists’ Views on Their Place in Society,’ over 70,000 entries from over 20,000 journalists were gathered in order to outline what their roles in society were by asking them for the three most important duties that journalists in their country must serve as. The most common descriptions used for journalistic roles that came up in the survey were the most prototypical, such as “informers,” “reporters,” “watchdogs,” “investigators,” “monitors,” and “educators.” (Hanitzsch, et al., 2019) Furthermore, it is crucial to examine closer to how journalists in developing and transitioning countries identify themselves in the study, which will serve the greater purpose of better centralizing the focus of TJ throughout the thesis itself.

“Many journalists, especially in non-Western countries, articulated a normative duty for intervention in social processes and for a more constructive attitude toward ruling powers” (Hanitzsch et al., 2019, p. 167), where journalists act as catalysts for change as it articulates further that “they also actively promote measures to remedy social problems and thus drive political and social reform” (p. 167). The normative prescriptions adhering to journalistic functions comes out of indirect negotiations

between the journalists themselves and the institutions that affect their capability to carry out their duty, rendering it necessary to analyze and assess the impact of state-building and developing efforts in lesser-democratic countries driven by interventionism found as a journalistic practice. “In TJ, the ambitions are higher and more specific; roles like “activist,” “public interest protector” and “educator” are linked to the transitional phases that society is going through” (Andresen et al. 2017, p. 618). These ambitions directly correlate to the level of trust that journalists retain in their respective state institutions.

In Hanitzsch and Berganza’s (2012) study, for example, journalists across the world were asked regarding their trust in key institutions such as the parliament, judiciary, political parties, etc. Furthermore, journalists were asked “to indicate the extent to which they consider themselves as watchdogs of the government” (Hanitzsch, Berganza 2012) using a 5-point rating scale for both. The principal takeaways from the aforementioned study for the purpose of strengthening the validity and substance of this paper derive from the results finding that “journalists are more trusting in countries that perform better in terms of media freedom and corruption” (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012, p. 802) and “journalists are indeed more trusting of public institutions in societies with higher interpersonal trust” (p. 797). Ostensibly, this serves as a solidified base for the differentiating of perceived journalistic roles and practices depending on the level of trust placed in their pillars of democracy. Another enabling factor of journalists corroborating their role can be identified through another one of the study’s takeaways: “In societies where the professional culture of journalism strongly submits to the watchdog role, institutions may perform better in terms of political output precisely because they are aware of journalism’s monitoring function”. (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012, p. 808). This can be utilized to showcase moreover why journalists lead themselves to more interventionist positions in their work, believing that the more there is a need for a watchdog in society, in turn, will bring better ‘political output,’ thus rendering their drive for ‘solution-orienteed’ reporting that hopefully can evoke change in democratic development. It is quite clear within this study that the level of trust varies alarmingly depending on the national criteria, making it far more relevant to acknowledge the demand for specific case studies to identifying the reasoning behind such notable variation in the trust of public institutions. In the conclusion to this

research, it is drawn out that “to the extent that national journalism cultures operate on the basis of values and beliefs that are widely shared by its members, it is also journalism as an institution that responds to a country’s political performance and interpersonal trust” (Hanitzsch & Berganza, 2012, p. 808).

### **2.1.2 Transitional Journalism as a Practice in Western Balkans**

On account of having established a prior outline of the basis for calling upon newer formulations of journalistic practices that do not prescribe to the Western tradition, it is fundamental to go deeper into the literary work that compels the scholarly understanding of this thesis which leads into a more specific practice of journalism. Journalists in developing and transitioning countries tend to delve away from the normative functions of their practice and take on a more engaged role in the issues they cover in order to serve as a stimulant for change. This is essentially what TJ seeks to formulate as its own practice. Consequently, empirical research that observes in more detail in a certain region or country can accelerate the defining of different journalistic practices that detach themselves from the prescribed academic archetype dominated by Western scholars. In 2017, an article titled “New Roles for Media In Western Balkans, A study of TJ” was published in Volume 18 of Routledge’s ‘Journalism Studies,’ known to be a journal that fosters innovation in the field of academic journalism. The 2017 study essentially serves as the foreground of the core in which this thesis attempts to solidify, the foundation and relevance of characterizing Western Balkan journalism practices and, more specifically, Kosovo’s.

Historically speaking, when referencing the transition from censorship and state-controlled media, it is natural to consider the former satellite states of the Soviet Union in the Eastern bloc, however, it is relevant to attribute the former states of Yugoslavia as well, largely due to the nature of its media before its breakup. The article makes a note of this by utilizing the book incorporating Eastern European media as a comparative study, titled ‘Eastern European Journalism: Before, During and After Communism,’ (1999) using it to back up the linkage between Western Balkans and Eastern European journalism as a whole: “The authors argue that journalism in former Yugoslavia was less controlled by the state, but nevertheless marked by the same characteristics as state-controlled communist media in this area” (Andresen, et al. 2017,

p. 615). Using the aforementioned information as context, it is necessary to not only address TJ as a characteristic of post-conflict environments but also post-communist based on the historical and political legacy of the 20th century. Accountability journalism is becoming a trait in mediascapes of young democracies, assigning itself to

An even more pivotal role as news media have additional tasks. These include the introduction of democratic practices and good governance, the rule of law and constitutionalism, the development of civil society, safeguarding new democratic institutions, the assessment of wrong-doing by old and new elites, evaluation of the national past and contributing to national integration. (Salovaara & Juzefovics, 2012, p. 763)

By adding these relevant texts to the literature scope, post-communist journalistic practices' applicability can fall under TJ's credentials. Recognizing the relevance of Yugoslavia's historical legacy, which will be extended deeper into consideration via literature review, Andresen et al.'s (2017) innovative approach to detailing interpretations of roles and institutional trust is based on quantitative takeaways from a 2014 and 2015 WJS survey that particularly questioned journalists around the world on how they view their positions in society and their level of confidence in state mechanisms. A variety of queries were proposed to respondents that were made to determine and measure introspectively how journalists perceive themselves in different roles, such as 'detached observer' and 'agenda setter', and externally regarding their placement of trust in various political institutions, such as the judiciary and political parties. The framing of the two research questions in the article accurately depicts the trajectory of the purpose of this thesis, as it takes on a regional standpoint of TJ itself, while the thesis attempts to centralize and strengthen its theory from a national context via a case study. "How do journalists and editors view journalism's roles in the transitional societies in the Western Balkans?" and "To what degree do they trust institutions in society responsible for leading societies in dealing with issues of transition?" (Andresen, et al. 2017, p. 621) as research questions serve as inspiration for the purpose of this research given that the hermeneutic results garnered from the questionnaire conceived a new agenda in journalism studies, as several papers

on Western Balkans concerning TJ were published following the 2014/15 surveys and 2017 article. From the survey, the 2017 article analyzed 1469 journalists' responses from four Western Balkan countries: Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania, that answered the questions from the survey on a scale of 1 to 5 in values, with 1 meaning 'unimportant' and 5 meaning 'extremely important' in the Journalistic roles survey. In the matter of institutional trust, respondents were asked to number 1 through 5 on how much they trusted any given institution, with 1 being 'no trust at all' and 5 being 'complete trust.'

In the study, we find that many conclusive observations were made by the researchers to help channel the substance of introducing TJ as a new field of research, as for example, it was noted that the "editorial staff put high value on media having a real impact in society" and "elements like "influencing public opinion" (from 3.90 to 4.10) and "advocate for social change" (from 3.88 to 4.13) score highly"(Andresen et al., 2017, p. 622). Evidently, this led to the conclusion derived from the journalistic roles questionnaire in which it was articulated that "journalism should have and has potential to contribute to support the development of the Western Balkan countries in times of transition" (Andresen et al., 2017, p. 622). However, it is also key to highlight that the study does recognize that Western Balkan journalists do possess traditional journalistic values such as 'being a detached observer' (from 3.79 to 4.67) and 'reporting things as they are,' (from 4.57 to 4.83) which does fall into the mix of what is prescribed as traditional journalism as being a combination of previously established journalistic practices in academic literature. It essentially consolidates what is seen as a multifaceted role of a journalist in transitory societies where they feel motivated or even so, required, to take on multiple duties at once in their work, where "the findings suggest that the journalists and editors consider that media have an important double role" (Andresen et al., 2017, p. 623). This comprises of the first being that journalists should follow established professional guidelines for reporting, and the second concerning media's ability to wield significant influence in society and spark change. This aforesaid double role is key to developing a well-grounded theoretical framework in TJ.

Additionally, the secondary evaluation of journalists' trust in institutions also increases the validity of the argument for a TJ agenda, as Western Balkan journalists were found to "have a low level of trust in society's central institutions" (Andresen et

al., 2017, p. 623). This is made visible via the results of the WJS study, where the trust in politicians and political parties is the lowest (from 1.64 to 1.76), meaning ‘no trust’ to ‘little trust,’ the parliament and government itself placed under ‘little trust.’ (from 1.97 to 2.39) and the judicial branch fell an average around 2, ‘little trust.’ Based on the results of the institutional trust, the researchers concluded that the results of the data are considerable because “they show the gap between the journalists’ perceptions that central issues need to be dealt with, but a deep mistrust in the institutions responsible for dealing with them” (Andresen et al., 2017, p. 623). While the conclusive results and discussion are also essential to the literary mapping of the dissertation, it is per contra far more relevant to apply its value towards the designing of the theory that will be employed in the ensuing theoretical framework.

The first example that can be argued was used to solidify the TJ agenda would be Milojević and Krstić’s (2018) work . They utilize the case of their homeland Serbia to propel the agenda of TJ research further, arguing that “considering journalism’s role perceptions in the Western Balkans, Andresen et al. (2017) introduces the concept of ‘TJ’ for setting the new research agenda in the area” (Milojević & Krstić, 2018, p. 38). The authors argue that by focusing on case studies such as the issue with media corruption in Serbia can lead to a more developed and reinforced understanding of journalistic practices that clearly incorporate TJ. The study attempts to expand on the knowledge and theory set forth in the inaugural publication by pursuing a wider understanding of the factors that influence and shape journalistic practices over the course of a long period of democratic transition, 12 years to be precise. Serbia’s historical context composes of a Western Balkan state emerging from a communist past in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945-1991) and the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic in the 1990s in which the latter instrumentalized the media as a tool constantly abused for nationalistic interests. Both Serbia and Kosovo’s transition to democracy happened almost a decade or more later in comparison to most post-communist countries during the beginning of the 1990s. The article outlines the effect of the sociopolitical processes that happened in Serbia in the 21st century that had a tremendous effect on how journalists interpret their roles in a transitioning society. Elements of corruption, politicians continually in power despite ties to Milosevic’s regime, clientelism, and

attacks on journalists have severely enforced the nature of Serbia's attribution to a partly-democratic state.

Milojević and Krstić (2018) declared that the aim of their study is “to contribute to the recently introduced research agenda on “TJ in the Western Balkans” through the use of a hierarchy-of-influences model coined by Shoemaker and Reese (1996) as a “framework to examine perceptions of media owners, managers and journalists about influences on their work in the context of transition in Serbia.” (Milojević & Krstić, 2018, pp. 41-42) However, using Serbia as a case study has led to a different interpretation of the new research agenda, in the sense that while Western Balkan journalists, according to the WJS survey, are more susceptible to taking on a more active role than their Western counterparts, they are also alarmingly vulnerable to the negative consequences of transitional societies. The study reveals from qualitative interviews with media actors that clientelism and corruption have become palpable as an embedded component of developing states that are slowly transitioning themselves through a post-conflict, nationalist and post-communist environment that heavily impedes the level of press freedom in the region. Given different levels of influences from micro to macro stemming from the hierarchy-of-influences model, the findings of the study from the individual, routine, organizational, extra-media, and social system levels “explain how and why media become instrumentalized during transitional periods” (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 50).

At the individual and routine level, the lack of value towards the journalistic profession that is accompanied by low salaries and long hours have led to unstable working conditions that contribute towards a journalists' inability to exhibit personal autonomy and integrity in their work. This eventually leads to the possibility of Serbian journalists accepting bribes which in some cases throughout the study, was made evident, however, not at an alarming rate, yet still unethical in terms of professional journalistic behavior. Examining the organizational level of newsrooms in the study, journalists are forced to succumb to the editorial policies enforced in the media outlet, such as in covering Serbia's EU integration, where one interview was revealed that they were instructed to report on the matter “without harming the country's relations with Russia” (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 47). Journalists are often discouraged from coming up with their own stories and forced to withdraw stories involving corruption

and bribery, in addition to pressure from media owners given the rapid privatization of the media market in Serbia that has led to immoral influential behavior on journalistic practices.

What was by far most significant in its influence towards the TJ research agenda was the extra-media and social systems level of the hierarchy, where the influence of politicians and business elites have left scarring repercussions on Serbia's press freedom, such as in the case study it was revealed that "politicians are very well informed about ongoing journalists' investigations and can stop stories before print" (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 48). The network of politicians and business moguls overreaches into its capabilities over the media sector in Serbia, where owners are typically closely associated with the party in power or even politicians themselves. One journalist was quoted with saying that "Journalists have disappeared from Serbian journalism. All we have are entertainers, microphone holders, emitters, re-writers, spoke persons and political dilettantes" (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 50).

What is key in understanding how this study can contribute to the furthering of the TJ research agenda is establishing the different trajectories of Western Balkan nations in their own respective transitional societies with regards to its journalistic practices. Namely, the study discusses how it pertains to TJ in the sense that declared:

We believe that our findings provide grounds for a better understanding of the Andresen et al. (2017) survey-based data about the existing gap between journalistic trust in the media as agents of change and the lack of trust in political institutions in times of transition. However, our study aligns with Andresen et al.'s (2017) conclusion that transition is 'a constant state of mind' of the Western Balkans journalists (p. 13). (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 51)

What the researchers are referring to in regard to 'the existing gap' is one of the main conclusions of Andresen et al. (2017) in which journalists view their role as 'agents of change' due to lack of trust in institutions in transitional societies. However, given the case of Serbia, "journalists can hardly practice watchdog role and resist various pressures," (Milojević & Krstić 2018, p. 52) thus leading to a more developed understanding regarding the conditions of media in transitional societies and how it

tends to differ under each national context in the Western Balkans. While journalists may consider their professions to be imperative as a catalyst in the development of their country's democracy, it is crucial to highlight the sociopolitical deterrents such as corruption and clientelism that deeply inhibit the capacity of TJ in the region. To conclude and set forth the TJ research agenda further, Milojević and Krstić (2018) assert that journalists in transitional societies are also to be considered not only as clients in the sociopolitical and economic environments of the state but also as actors. The study plays a vital role in hypothesizing the nature of this dissertation, pinpointing that there are 'different trajectories' of TJ needed to be explored in the Western Balkans, which in turn shines a light on the main focus of the thesis, Kosovo.

### **2.1.3 Media Landscape in Kosovo**

Before further defining the journalistic practices that have developed outside of the Western narrative in terms of newfound research agendas, it is critical to understand the literature that outlines the current state of journalism in the Western Balkan region, which specifically pertains to Kosovo's current media landscape. What the relevant academic information describes is a full-fledged account of the situation regarding media in Kosovo and the region itself that leads to a refined understanding of why journalists are unable to observe traditional norms and instead encounter themselves in a situation where they must adapt to the political, economic and social conditions that symbiotically determine the capabilities of the media to provide unbiased information to the public eye. As previously mentioned in the hierarchy-of-influences study in Serbia, there is an identifiable nature of TJ that unfolds itself upon different trajectories in transitional societies such as Serbia and Kosovo. While journalists do actively view their role as substantially divergent from outlined Western practices, it is pertinent to recognize that there is a high degree of interference in media that hinders the ability of journalists to seek out and facilitate development and progress. Yet, it is exactly this obstruction of press freedom by the elite that indirectly compels journalists to establish themselves as activists and educators of their society in order to boost the transition into democracy, thus making it another aspect of TJ worth recognizing when examining the mediascape of the relevant case study in the dissertation.

In an article addressing the consequences of media clientelism for journalist–politician power relationships in the Western Balkans, Lindita Camaj (2016), sets forth the scope of the circumstances that impact how journalists tend to operate in Kosovo, also establishing similarities and differences with two other countries in the region – Albania and Montenegro. The rapport that exists between journalists, politicians and business elite in Kosovo lead to research suggesting that that “at the level of the news-making process, when journalists and sources come into contact to set the news agenda, political sources might have an upper hand or at least they share power and neither side fully dominates.” (Gans, 1979 in Camaj, 2016, p. 232) The results of the study seemingly exhibit an alarming number of journalists revealing that their work is severely impeded by the nexus of these aforementioned power relationships, bending their autonomy at the will and interest of those in control of political and economic influence. 60 journalists from Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo were interviewed in the study, 19 of those journalists being from Kosovo, representing eight different media organizations through interviews conducted in 2008 and 2012. Kosovar journalists were asked to describe their level of independence in creating news, relationship with the government and the degree of transparency that enables them to inform the public regarding necessary government information. The responses to Camaj’s semi-structured interviews, specifically in the Kosovo perspective of its mediascape, tends to be disquieting in terms of press freedom in Western Balkans, and contributes to painting a more extensive picture of how journalism in transitioning societies should be perceived. This is not only in the sense of how they view their roles and lack of institutional trust, but also what elements come into play that tend to shape how journalists can actively seek change in their own societies given their assumed positions as sources of non-partisan information for the public, in addition to inferring upon the causes for this absence of confidence in the state-building effort of their partly-free democracies.

The right to journalists obtaining information from their respective institutions, which is considered standard for any liberal democracy, is what Kosovar journalists tend to struggle with in their profession, according to the results of the study. One journalist was recorded saying “they think we continue to be allies, thus we cannot criticize them in the sense that ‘we know each other, so we should not expose each

other's scandals'. They rely on this personal and moral relationship we created before.” (Camaj, 2016, p. 237) The context under what the journalist was referring to was concerning their media's ties with a political party that came into power, largely because in the past they had been on the same side in the opposition, attempting to monitor and control the previous coalition government. This can be observed as a consequence of historical repercussions given the media's role pre-21st century Kosovo, as Camaj points out that “there still prevails an attitude reminiscent of the old regime as officials do not understand and respect their legal obligations for transparency” (Camaj, 2016, p. 237).

To add on to the understanding of how there still remain misconceptions regarding the relationship between the media and politicians, the study notes that the Kosovo government, upon time of completing the interviews, still did not appoint an official spokesperson for communicating relevant information even seven months after it came into power. Even the legal framework, the Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation, which is in place in order to grant journalists the right to access such information, is typically ignored by institutions that lack the resolution to implement such liberties that prevent obstructive culture towards journalists. Instead of respecting the law and pointing journalists in the right direction of where the information can be found, institutions tend to abuse instead by sending journalists into a maze of prolonged bureaucratic mechanisms that are suspiciously designed to discourage journalists from pursuing further on the information trail. Another Kosovo journalist that partook in the study was quoted as stating that “if you ask for sensitive information, they point you to the legal way. They throw the FOI law in front of you” (Camaj, 2016, pp. 238-239). What the study essentially aims to achieve as a relevant component of the literature framework in the dissertation is an understanding of the challenges that journalists face in transitional societies such as Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries. In contrast to previous times when communication predominantly flowed from the government to the media, this research indicates that the interaction between journalists and politicians in the Balkan nations has transformed over time into a bilateral exchange characterized by collaboration and strife. While some politicians continue to persist in utilizing tactics from the previous regime to impede journalists' independence through intimidation, shortage of transparency, and absence of accountability. Keeping this in mind, it

provides a more expanded structure of how media in Kosovo operates when considering how TJ as a practice can be applied to the relevant case study in the dissertation.

Furthermore, reports from both Freedom House and Reporters without Borders (RSF) also provide a more up-to-date assessments of the current media situation in Kosovo. In 2023 edition of their annual World Press Freedom Index, Kosovo occupied the 56th spot in the world. This signifies an improvement from 2022, where the country was tallied at 61st. Under a regional perspective, Kosovo's level of press freedom this year performed better than Bosnia-Herzegovina (64), Serbia (91) and Albania (96). However, the country continues to trail behind North Macedonia (38), Montenegro (39) and Croatia (42). "While the Kosovo media market is diverse, its development is limited by the small size and strict separation along the ethnic lines. Media independence is threatened by poor regulation and dependence on partisan distribution of public funds." (RSF, 2023, para. 1) The report further details and confirms that Camaj's findings in her 2016 study continue to ring true to this day in Kosovo, given that despite the media's achievement in holding politicians responsible, journalists continue to become victims of political abuse. The effectiveness of the media regulator, Independent Media Commission (IMC), has been inadequate and was recently implicated in a corruption scandal. To support the RSF index, non-profit think tank Freedom House also provides an index on Global Freedom, classifying Kosovo as 'partly free' in its 2022 country report, with a score of 56/100 based on its performance in rule of law, elections, political participation, protection of civil and individual liberties and the stability of its institutions. Freedom House (2022) reports that its

institutions remain weak, and rampant corruption has given rise to deep public distrust in the government. Journalists face serious pressure, and risk being attacked in connection with their reporting. The rule of law is inhibited by executive interference in the judiciary. (2022, para. 1)

The overview of the current situation in Kosovo given by Freedom House portrays a suitable connection to the research agenda on TJ given the 'deep public distrust' in Kosovo's weak institutions, in connection to the discrimination that journalists face constantly in their profession.

## ***2.2 Theoretical Framework: Transitional Journalism in Kosovo***

Now that a majority of the relevant literature has been briefly assessed and analyzed for further utilization upon application towards the methodological process, the finalized theoretical framework will essentially culminate the essence of what it means to define TJ as a prevalent practice in Kosovo, and moreso the region as a whole. The cornerstone of the dissertation's efforts to proactively elongate and heighten the nature of TJ's research comes from two of the three authors that doctored the initial 2017 study on the practice, Dr. Kenneth Andresen and Abit Hoxha, alongside James A. Sweeney, a British academic researcher focusing on transitional justice. 'Transitional Justice and TJ: Case-Study on Kosovo' was published in 2020 as a part of the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*. By correlating the ideas of TJ with the selected country of the case study for this dissertation, it will serve as the most referential and justified piece of literature that drives the main elements of the research design and, eventually, findings and discussion that conclude the derivative results of the mixed method approach. Building upon the inferences from the results of the 2017 study, the aforementioned case study sought to understand the role of TJ further by conducting semi-structured interviews with 30 journalists, which elaborate on the connections between transitional justice and the media.

The first component of the framework involving TJ based on the aims of the 2020 study is fundamentally the concept of transitional justice and how it is tied in with the construction of the contemporary research agenda. What the authors set out to uncover through the empirical research is to purpose of "examining the role of journalists as non-state actors in relation" to transitional justice, connected with the increasingly accepted "notion that non-state actors may engage in practices that, if they were carried out by the state, would be recognizable as transitional justice." (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 487) There is a separation in this context regarding the aspect of truth that is invoked by two lines of historical accounting in transitional societies, thus being the institutions and the civil society that assumes the role of 'truth-seekers.' Institutions are typically charged with producing 'official truths' that are decreed by truth commissions or a court of law. On the other hand, 'unofficial truths,' according to Sweeney et al.

(2020), are when civil society decides upon adopting the role of judicial institutions to deliver ‘official truths’ and do so themselves in order to establish better results in the development of transitional justice. This is essentially how the media itself proclaims itself in its own role as a harbinger of ‘unofficial truths’ that seek to positively transform the path to the deliverance of transitional justice in post-conflict societies such as Kosovo, as described in the paper. It calls upon the position of the paper to be noted that “the position taken here is that transitional justice (and by extension ‘TJ’) may be visible even a long time after the catalytic point (the cessation of active hostilities or the collapse of the previous regime)” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 487).

What is vital to the research agenda of TJ is its connection to the concept of ‘peace journalism.’, defined by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p. 5), as ‘when editors and reporters make choices - of what to report, and how to report it - that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.’ TJ is largely tied in with the practices of peace journalism, given that the media does in fact, play a role in simmering the possibilities of further tension in post-conflict environments as a means of transitioning towards a more-democratic and developed state, such as in the case of Kosovo. As it is widely known that conflict coverage tends to focus heavily on violence and war reporting, peace journalism, in turn, suggests an alternate approach that is eminently focused on solution-oriented reporting with a more humanistic perspective on elements of conflict and tension. The purposeful aspiration to spark change in TJ, as previously mentioned in the preceding chapters of the literature review, can also be considered on the same level as peace journalism’s conspicuous determination to de-escalate conflict and promote reconciliation. However, it is crucial to highlight the criticism detailed by Sweeney et al. (2020) regarding peace journalism that assumably leads to an obligation for TJ to distance itself from the former. As per Loyn (2007, p.1) “peace journalism is at best meaningless, and at worst a uniquely unhelpful and misleading prescription for journalism in general, and broadcast journalism in particular,” due to the incapacity of journalists to remain objective when incorporating peace journalism practices, claiming that by Loyn’s (2007) criticism that journalists ought to be “observers, not players” (p.3). Hanitzsch (2007) has also argued that these concepts of influencing change via media are largely overestimated, given that there are many factors that are involved in

accelerating the progress of a transitioning society, not only the reporting itself. He further argues via the allegory remark that peace journalism and transitional justice (as an extension of TJ) arrive as “old wine in new bottles” (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 2) due to the fact that “dilemmas seen within transitional justice practice have been overstated; that they exist and are resolved routinely in established democracies” (Posner & Vermeule, 2008, in Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 488).

While the groundwork of the theoretical framework remains to be the WJS survey that was assessed and analyzed for TJ’s breakthrough in 2017, the TJ project highlights the need to dig deeper into the WJS numbers and “probe further how journalists (in Kosovo) view their extended roles” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 489). However, it is quintessential to declare that TJ is not meant to be viewed as a ‘normative proposition’ such as this could be a direct recommendation for how journalism should be conducted during transitional periods. It merely provides an accurate description of the conditions that could prescribe its existence under certain circumstances. The interviews conducted with 30 Kosovar journalists, 28 being ethnically Albanian reporting from media in their own language, and 2 ethnic Serbs likewise, were indirectly asked about their role in TJ without ever referencing the term itself. Interviews were asked about “whether the interviewees thought that the news media had played a special role in Kosovo, after the armed conflict” and also “asked directly about their experiences of reporting upon formal transitional justice mechanisms including criminal prosecutions and the various truth commission initiatives” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 490). The results are herewith presented in the arrangement of how Kosovar journalists from different forms of media (print, online, radio) view themselves as an influential constituent of the transitional justice process, further determining “whether and how the news media views itself as having played extended an extended role, in the sense of ‘affecting’ or even ‘effecting’ transitional justice” (Sweeney et al., 2020, pp. 490-491). The aspect in which the researchers present the findings culminate the most relevant facet of the theoretical framework in relation to how TJ, transitional justice and journalists in Kosovo are intertwined meticulously.

The purported reporting procedures that the interviewees sought after are how transitional justice in Kosovo was covered after the 1998-99 war, relating to the prosecuting of those responsible for war crimes and restitution for the victims. What

becomes extensively addressed here is the magnitude of their capabilities and jurisdiction that they feel in regard to covering sensitive issues such as the special war crimes tribunal that was set up in the Hague by the International Criminal Court as a means to persecute those responsible for war crimes carried out by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the war. The level of editorial pressure is examined and perceived as a substantial part of TJ's framework, as it directly influences the practices in which Kosovar journalists follow in order to maneuver through such obstacles in their reporting concerning grave topics pertaining to transitional justice, such as the KLA's war crimes. While a handful of interviewees had asserted that they experienced no editorial pressure when reporting on such issues related to transitional justice, "many in the Kosovar Albanian media were equally clear that they had felt editorial pressure, leading to a situation where they would have to second-guess editors' views after stories were not published" (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 491).

Examples made of such directly correlate to journalists removing themselves from the story altogether due to the magnitude of modifications inflicted upon by the editor due to narrative direction, furthermore even KLA fighters themselves managed to pressure editors and journalists from running certain stories that may tarnish their reputation despite the push for transitional justice. Another instance featured an editor putting the journalist under obligation to report a complete lie, alleging that a UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) soldier had beaten up a KLA veteran when it was, in fact, the veteran that had instigated the altercation. The most alarming confession from the interviewees was concerning a scenario where journalists were forced to fabricate witnesses in order to "contradict statements made by a former KLA fighter who, in order to gain a lesser sentence in relation to crimes of which he was found guilty, had agreed to testify against other former KLA fighters in future trials" (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 492). Understanding that editorial pressure exists in Kosovo media in times of transition, which affects the process of transitional justice, is influential to the nature of TJ itself as not only does it directly influence journalism practices in transitional justice but in all aspects of media practice in Kosovo. Acknowledging this aspect of theory in relation to the dissertation is crucial to how the findings will be interpreted. Main actors involved in the transitional justice process, such as former rebellion fighters (KLA) on the side of Kosovo during the war against Serbia, have been

detrimental to the adopted double role of journalists in their transitional societies, which directly reveal the obstacles that Kosovar journalists face in the face of the corruptive habits involved in post-conflict environments.

The mentality and attitudes of journalists to carry out their work in Kosovo are heavily influenced by the capabilities of the sources they cover that correlate to issues surrounding transitional justice. Consequently, this spreads towards the remainder of their practice due to the distressful and vigilant environment that unfolds in the mediascape after a conflict. The treatment of politicians, war veterans, and other prominent actors in transitioning societies towards journalists, as exposed in Sweeney et al.'s (2020) paper, is a conclusive example of how TJ operates in Kosovo. Journalists participating in the interviews revealed that they had received death threats for revealing that many people were pretending to be KLA veterans in order to receive pensions and other benefits reserved for former freedom fighters. This eventually led to them being discouraged from running the story and was forced to drop the matter for not exposing the truth.

Another case where a mayor was caught covering up the number of KLA veterans in the municipality by a journalist led to the mayor “to compel the journalist to increase the number on the, wholly false, basis that either they had deliberately reduced the number or misunderstood what the mayor meant” (Sweeney et al. 2020, pp. 492-493). Regardless, the journalist chose to stand by the original amount of KLA veterans that the mayor had reported despite the political pressure. Evidently, not only do journalists face editorial pressure but also pressure from sources such as politicians and veterans. Cases of inventing witnesses, unwelcomed story revisions, forced blatant lies, political pressure, and threats have all become observable and existent under the research agenda of TJ. As a result, it affects not only the process of transitional justice in Kosovo but in all aspects of media coverage, which directs further to the more centralized scope of the dissertation. While this statement can be said for the Kosovar Albanian language media, it is also equally as important to consider the ramifications of such pressure on Kosovar Serbian journalists, which was further noted in the academic research.

When Sweeney et al. (2020) interviewed Serbian journalists, it became clear that the ethnic lines between the two-language media both face similar issues in terms of

patriotic allegiance to one's identity. A key note to make here is concerning the revelation of one Serbian editor who immediately acknowledged the issues faced in such allegiance:

whilst they wanted to include in their work discussion of conflict victims from all ethnic communities, they would be welcomed as a 'hero' by the Serb community if they only reported on Serbian victims; but if they wrote about war crimes committed against any Albanian victims, then they would be treated as a 'traitor' to their community. (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 493)

As elsewhere in the Balkans, patriotic journalism is a key feature of TJ in that it can deeply influence the nature of media's impact on the development of transitional justice that becomes particularly extended to all relevant areas of transitional societies. Another Kosovo Serb journalist was quoted as saying that "they would be 'crucified' by the Serb communities of both Kosovo and Serbia if they were critical of the 'Serb List' political party in Kosovo" (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 493). Failure to abide by one's identity and ethnicity for the sake of pursuing honest and impactful journalism can result in disastrous consequences for both Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian journalists, which is evidently why it is crucial to consider the aspect of patriotic journalism within the content of the theoretical framework.

Obstacles that reveal itself in the systematic journalistic practices of Western Balkan countries riddled with ethnic lines and trauma remaining from conflict. Evaluating how ethnic lines affect the nature of journalism in transitioning societies will be directly examined in the research paradigms and discussed further within the context of the discussion of results. Allegiance towards one's ethnicity can be easily considered as an extension of transitional justice, further complicating the deadlock between efforts to move on from the scars of conflict and ethnic hatred, or to incriminate those who committed war crimes during the Kosovo War of 1998-99. Understanding and disseminating the consequences of the division among ethnic lines is key to developing the TJ research agenda.

The question of whether media can directly impact and reignite tension or conflict in post-conflict environments can be first answered by determining whether

journalists in Kosovo believe that the media has played a role in confronting the conflict's legacy. One Kosovo Albanian editor involved in the interviews was paraphrased as suggesting that "the media had the 'main role' in relation to raising or lowering tensions within inter-ethnic conflict." (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 494). On the other side of the ethnic lines, A Kosovo Serb interviewee's thoughts aligned with that of the Kosovo Albanian editor, stating that "the media have a 'huge role because they can also cause conflict and they can also suppress it, that is, to calm it'" (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 494). While this is directly connected to the realm of transitional justice, the purpose of establishing this concept in the theoretical framework is to understand that not only does the media impact this process, but in many other aspects of Kosovo media that can be foreseen as TJ; such as current versions of post-conflict tension that will be addressed in the research design. Sweeney et al.'s (2020) research involves an outline of the practices involved in covering transitional justice that directly correlate to views on how TJ is materialized, giving a better scope of apprehension in pinpointing certain characteristics in the theorization. These practices themselves will be identified later on throughout the course of the dissertation.

The involvement of the media in relation to holding the guilty accountable for 'conflict-related crimes can showcase and foreshadow the relevant practices that exist within TJ. According to the research, the interviewees demonstrated a clear understanding that the media's intentions could extend beyond pursuing formal accountability and venture into retaliatory conduct. Post-war journalism even reached a capability of inciting violence, where one case in 2004 caused the worst inter-ethnic violence witnessed in Kosovo since the end of the war, after Kosovo Albanian-language media had falsely reported that 3 Kosovo-Albanian boys who had drowned in a river were chased by Kosovo Serbs. The consequences of the retributory reporting led to "nineteen people killed, hundreds more injured - including soldiers from the Kosovo international force (KFOR) - and more than 3,200 were uprooted from their homes following days of clashes between ethnic Albanians and Serbs" (UN News, 2004, para. 4). Another case earlier in 2000 involved a newspaper publishing information accusing a Serbian of being a war criminal led to 25-year-old Petar Topoljksi's disappearance and murder, which as a repercussion, the newspaper was forced to shut down due to the poor showing of 'vigilante' journalism. Journalists have also acknowledged the difficulties in

being compelled to ‘balance’ the atrocities of the crimes committed by both Serbs and Albanians during the war, as a means to be more ‘unbiased’ in reporting and not focusing on who committed a lesser crime during the Kosovo War. This pressure to provide balanced reporting can also be hypothesized as exposed not only during the war and its aftermath but also during rises in tension today seen between both sides that will be analyzed in the research design. The level of influence which media has on the relations between Albanians and Serbians is a core element of this theoretical framework that will lead to a line of questioning towards interviewees themselves, providing a synopsis of the current situation between journalism and ethnic tension in Kosovo.

Another crucial aspect of the dissertation’s grounded theory in TJ is the matter of how ethnolinguistic determinants can affect the practices in which journalists operate and how the media might have an impact on the nature of relations in ethnically divided transitional societies such as Kosovo. There are few instances of media covering issues in both Serbian and Albanian, thus making it difficult to reach a wider audience in Kosovo mediascape. According to one Kosovo Serb journalist in the TJ interviews:

You cannot see in almost any Albanian media a story about the Serb community, about how Serbs live, what their consumer basket is, what their problems are. On the other hand, you cannot either see in the Serbian media a story about the Albanian environment... with ordinary people, ordinary citizens. (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 496)

This can be an accurate depiction of the divide in Kosovo’s media landscape, however, given the fact that Serbs only make up 3% of the total population while Albanians comprise of over 90%, it is a bit clear to understand the issue concerning ethnolinguistic friction and incapability to properly portray all aspects and sides of Kosovo’s society in the news. One of the most alarming and key findings from the central study is that most of the participants in the interviews concurred that they either had or would take it upon themselves to ‘reframe’ stories that could potentially provoke ethnic tensions. Ultimately, this is the essence of what the dissertation aims to uncover in respect to TJ, determining its effect on Kosovo mediascape in a specific case study event. How do Kosovar journalists frame their stories in order to de-escalate tension in a

post-conflict transitioning society? According to Sweeney et al. (2020), a Kosovar Serb interviewee was quoted stating that

The journalists' job is to prevent tension or if they are not able to prevent it, they should try to minimize it or soften it. Media must not in any case ignite hate, or tension, or anything that could lead to any kind of conflicts and so on. (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 497)

The matter of self-censorship is deeply embedded in the practice of TJ, as journalists in Kosovo must be aware what can affect the prevention of tension in the country. If they were aware that an article would cause significant tension, they would choose to withhold it, and they themselves were cautious in their choice of words because they understood what topics were sensitive to both Albanians and Serbians. While this is not the case for all journalists in Kosovo, as some in the study claimed it was their duty to remain 'impartial' and report what they find regardless of potential danger or outlash; it is important to note that in the practice or lack of practice of self-censorship does in fact, contribute to reconciliation. A Kosovo Albanian editor was quoted as assigning the role of the media as "the ones that can contribute to inter-ethnic reconciliation and can also contribute to building a rule of law" (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 498). However, it is also imperative to highlight that journalists are seen as 'traitors' by their ethnic communities in case of reporting about victims from the other ethnic side, which is another feature of TJ to consider in the theoretical framework regarding the ethnic implications of Kosovo mediascape that affects the very nature of news-reporting. In conclusion to the theoretical framework, the findings and discussion of the 2020 study set forth the new research agenda to be conducted on TJ formed by the methodology of this dissertation that will follow.

The discussion first confirms, which is crucial to the understanding of journalistic practice and application in the following methodology, that the TJ findings in the 2020 study strengthen the assertion that the aforementioned 2017 study. Accordingly, Kosovo journalists find it important to fulfill their roles as 'an adversary to the government' in comparison to the other states that partook in the WJS surveys in 2014 and 2015. The researchers elaborate to assert that the findings from the study "confirm that the news media in Kosovo view themselves on an extended role"

(Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 501) in relation to reporting on transitional justice measures, hypothesizing and furthermore affirming that journalists believe they play a role in affecting/effecting transitional justice. TJ essentially surrounds the notion of “seeking accountability, as self-censorship or reconciliation-focused, as historical accounting, and as advocacy for victims” (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 502) and given the new data from the TJ project, the complexity of the research agenda is heightened due to the lack of agreement from Kosovo journalists regarding what exactly constitutes their ‘extended role’ or what that specifically involves.

In transitional contexts, journalism plays a dual role. It is not only influenced by the ongoing transition but also has the power to shape or contribute to the transition itself. In order for TJ to be considered a ‘normative proposition’ similar to peace journalism, it is crucial to develop a research design that can detect its impact and utilization in the current Kosovo media landscape.

Solid evidence of the impact and effectiveness of transitional justice mechanisms is notoriously slim, and so TJ should not be allowed to emerge with the same empirical vacuum. This would also facilitate the justification of excluding certain practices from the rubric of ‘TJ’, such as retributive or vigilante journalism. (Sweeney et al. 2020, pp. 502-503)

This very need for further examination of the TJ agenda using the following mixed method methodological approach. Lastly, it is important to ascertain that the theoretical framework’s reliance on the 2020 study is that it contributes with empirical evidence to confirm TJ can be observed in the perspectives expressed by the news media in Kosovo. The 2020 study concludes itself by stating that “it is necessary to see whether and how it manifests in other transitional or post-conflict settings; and to develop the methodology for assessing its impact” (Sweeney et al. 2020, p. 503), thus reserving the justification for more research on the agenda. Now that the review and framework of TJ practices has been identified and analytically theorized, a well-grounded approach to the methodology supported by the theoretical framework will provide the best results possible in the results and discussion of findings to follow.

### 3 Methodology

Now that the literature and theory have been elaborated and justified, it is necessary to delimitate the methodology utilized to analyze how Transitional Journalism is present as an identifiable practice in the Western Balkans and, more specifically, in Kosovo. The ongoing dispute between Kosovo and Serbia over Serbia's refusal to recognize its breakaway province has heightened tensions in both 2022 and 2023. Assessing and analyzing the media's coverage on the ongoing conflict that has broken out in bouts of violence and threats has led for a consideration of monitoring articles that may or may not employ TJ frames, accompanied by the reactions and opinions of journalists themselves upon whether or not they applied such a practice to their work, and accept it as such. In this regard, the main goal of this thesis is to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1: To what extent are TJ practices used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?**

**RQ2: To what extent are TJ frames used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?**

Two hypotheses were made in response to the preceding research questions:

**Hypothesis 1:** TJ frames are commonly frequent in Kosovo-Serbia conflict coverage.

**Hypothesis 2:** TJ practices are easily identifiable and recognized in Kosovo-Serbia conflict coverage, though journalists might not agree on how TJ is defined as a concept.

This chapter is divided into four subchapters. Firstly, the sampling criteria used for selecting the 10 journalists and media portals studied and the rationale for the timeframe applied for gathering their 59 articles are explained. This research uses a mixed-method approach employing qualitative and quantitative methods. Thus, the second unit outlines the quantitative approach, detailing a content analysis in the light of framing theory (Entman, 1993, Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). The third explains the

qualitative method involving reconstruction interviews (Reich & Barnoy, 2016). Finally, the current research is compared to the thesis proposal, justifying the alterations made.

### ***3.1 Alterations from Research Proposal***

The initial aim of this study was to answer the following research question:

*To what extent are TJ practices used amongst Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serbian journalists in the Kosovo license plate dispute?*

As stated, in the original thesis proposal, the focus was on the 2022's license plate dispute. However, based on the trajectory of escalation since the document was presented to Charles University, it is seemingly more relevant to cover recent events occurring in Kosovo largely due to this dispute: what was first considered a feud over license plates became embroiled into actual violence occurring in the north of Kosovo between Serb protesters and Kosovo Police alongside NATO soldiers. In this regard, the first substantial change was on the title of the research, with the alteration made from "Kosovo license plate dispute" to a broader overview of the entire scope of the "Kosovo-Serbia conflict". To exemplify the escalation and justify this change, it is valid to note that "11 Italian soldiers and 19 Hungarian ones "sustained multiple injuries, including fractures and burns from improvised explosive incendiary devices" (Al-Jazeera, 2023, para. 6). This is largely due to the chronology of events that occurred after Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti postponed the enforcement of the license plate reciprocity.

After the rising tension and blockades carried out by Serbs residing in northern Kosovo, "Kosovo Serbs resigned from their positions as MPs, mayors, judicial officials and police officers in a coordinated protest against alleged breaches of agreements made between Serbia and Kosovo in Brussels" (Bami & Stojanovic, 2022, para. 1). Due to the withdrawal of Kosovo Serbs from the government, local elections were set to be held in late April in the Serb-majority north of Kosovo; however, both Kosovo Serb politicians and voters alike refused to participate in the elections as a result of the continued boycott against Kosovo's breach of agreement in the EU facilitated dialogue between

Kosovo and Serbia in Brussels. Furthermore, Kurti claimed that “Belgrade was intimidating Serbs from the north not to participate in the elections” (Kurti, 2023, as cited by Potok, 2023, para. 14).

As previously mentioned, the expected methodology and methods for data gathering and analysis was a mixed-method approach employing both qualitative and quantitative practices to the empirical research. The reason for applying a dual technique is partly due to the inexistence of a mixed-method approach in any other previously published papers on TJ. As the previously referenced paper in the literature review states: “focusing on single cases will deepen the view into the complex nexus of forces that affect the performance of journalists” (Milojević & Krstić, 2018, p. 39). By focusing the methodology on the case of Kosovo and a specific ongoing conflict in the country, thus being in the northern part where the Serb majority resides, it contributes to a well-rounded and up-to-date understanding of whether or not and how exactly TJ functions as a practice by examining online media coverage of the conflict itself.

It was proclaimed that the quantitative method would utilize framing analysis through inductive coding using three types of online media portals present in Kosovo: International (Balkan Insight and Radio Free Europe), Serbian-language (Kallxo and Gazeta Express), and Albanian-language (Kosovo Online and Kossev). The reason for the selection of all three types of media portals is to allow for TJ to be capable of being examined and analyzed in all aspects of Kosovo mediascape, where online media is the most dominant. The time period initially chosen for the research design was allotted from July 21, 2022 to April 21, 2023, nine months from the escalation of tension at the border, where protests and blockades were held by Kosovo Serbs that led to the postponement of the implementation of license plate removal, delaying its enforcement until April 21, 2023. The main purpose of the research was to uncover how TJ played an active role in affecting the implementation of Kosovo license plates in northern Kosovo.

Highlighting further the chronological escalation of tension in Kosovo is necessary to justify altering the time period mentioned in the initial proposal’s methodology. The tendency for instability and uncertainty in a post-conflict and post-communist environment such as the Western Balkans renders it challenging to determine the ideal time period that would permit an optimum analysis of how TJ is practiced, thus being at a time when tensions are at an all-time high between Kosovo

and Serbia. After the refusal of Kosovo Serbs to participate in the municipal elections, Kosovo Albanian politicians decidedly ran in the elections to represent the interests of the Albanian minority residing in the North (1,500 out of 40,000), given the almost non-existent voter turnout from Kosovo Serbs, Albanian mayors (and one Bosniak) expectedly won the four municipal elections in the area. In retaliation, protests in the North ignited the worst violence Kosovo had seen since 2010 (Delauney & Armstrong, 2023). To make matters worse, Serbia's army was put on high military alert, alongside a rapid increase of troops sent to the border with Kosovo. In a statement, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabic claimed that the situation in northern Kosovo has "never been more difficult" (The Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2023, para. 1).

After the May protests that led to the multiple injuries of NATO troops providing security in the North to allow the new mayors to take office, protesters struck once again a few weeks later in June, assaulting almost a dozen journalists, which led to Kurti stating on Twitter that "the physical attacks on those reporting from the ground are absolutely unacceptable and must be condemned by all parties who are otherwise vocal on the situation." (Kurti, 2023) During this time, qualitative research for the dissertation was conducted in Kosovo, where journalists found it far more relevant to discuss the current conflict rather than the root cause of the conflict when it began over license plates. Furthermore, based on the nature of the qualitative method found in reconstruction interviews, it was also necessary to reconfigure the time period to a more recent one. In this regard,

it is important to balance the item-sampling period so that it is long enough to cover a rich variety of items, event types and news circumstances, but at the same time is short enough not to challenge reporters' memory during the interviews, especially with regard to their earlier publications (Reich & Barnoym, 2016, p. 485)

Therefore, conclusive to Reich and Barnoy's (2016, p. 485) recommendation, "interviews must be scheduled as close as possible to the end of item sampling." Therefore, as furthermore elaborated in the following methodological chapters, interviewees were asked to select pieces from the recent months that they have no issue in the recollection of article reconstruction. Initially it was registered that two articles

from each aforementioned media portal would be selected and analyzed through framing analysis and inductive coding, examining and observing whether it may fall under frames pertaining to TJ. However, given the fact that the readjusted timeline has been adjusted to fit the nature of the qualitative approach, it is alarmingly relevant to justify and demonstrate the alteration of the methodology. Though it remains intact in its initial methods, it is modified to fit the current situation in order to overcome certain limitations. The proposed approach in the quantitative method that would soon follow into the qualitative method was to contact two journalists from each media outlet mentioned above, after having inductively coded their articles for TJ frames, and engage them in reconstruction interviews loosely based on themes surrounding the coding of their articles and TJ. The issue upon preliminary research for the methodology was that most of the articles covering the Kosovo-Serbia conflict over the allotted time period, were not signed by reporters, except for Balkan Insight. This made it difficult to seek out the reporters for the interview phase. Therefore, it was imperative to consider how to overcome this obstacle while continuing to adhere to the thesis' initial aims.

### ***3.2 Sampling of journalists and media portals***

Considering the importance of the mixed-method approach, it was necessary to configure a solution that would still apply both the coding scheme and the interview structure to preserve the strength of the dissertation's results.

The selection of journalists happened through personal network due to four years of experience working as a journalist in Kosovo and snowball sampling.. Purposive non-probability sampling is when “a researcher may want to understand an issue in greater detail for one particular population rather than worry about the ‘generalizability’ of these results, they may want to use ‘purposive sampling’ for the study.” (Setia, 2016, p. 505) Furthermore, it is to be utilized especially when the researcher already holds well-professed expertise, thus being Kosovo mediascape. Therefore, snowball sampling only serves as a supplement to purposive sampling, due to the fact that “the diversity of samples generated via this method has repeatedly been questioned” (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018, p.1), partially due to selection bias.

Therefore, ten journalists from seven different online media portals in Kosovo mediascape were selected, six women and four men, to provide different perspectives on the practice of TJ and the coverage of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. They were contacted in May and June 2023 by social media or email to send five to eight samples of their work in the previous month related to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, in areas such as transitional justice, ethnic tension, violence, protests, foreign affairs, and diplomatic relations. In total, 59 articles were selected and used in the thesis. They were both in Albanian and English, languages the researcher is proficient in, making it possible to discuss in detail the processes and content of each piece. The sampling time frame extends primarily from July 3, 2023 to March 30, 2023, chosen to provide a longer time period to consolidate relevant articles while also allowing journalists to recall their writing process. The exceptions are two articles from February due to a lack of more recent work done by a particular professional. Regarding the selection of the journalists and articles, according to Guest et al. (2006, p. 76): “the more similar participants in a sample are in their experiences with respect to the research domain, the sooner we would expect to reach saturation”, therefore dictating the need for the participants to provide an assurance of variation in their articles that were provided Likewise

The sampling of news organizations and individual reporters could focus on maximizing comparability or increasing diversity, considering the implications of mixes such as elite and tabloid journalists; public service and commercial broadcasts; aggregation-based versus original reporting-based; national, local and hyper-local; institutional and citizen-based; investigative and beat reporting. (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, p. 484)

The emphasis on providing a wide-ranging mix of different media portals in Kosovo containing journalists that covered the conflict in distinct approaches was relevant for ensuring quality in the dissertation’s findings. Regarding ethnicity, nine of the ten interviewees were Albanian and one Serbian. It is important to note that one of the Albanian journalists was from Albania, not Kosovo, thus concluding that only eight of the ten journalists interviewed and coded were, in fact, Kosovo Albanian. The list of participating journalists and their respective media portal are as follows.

**Table 1***Participating journalists in the study*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Online Media Portal</b>	<b>Level of locality</b>	<b># of Articles Coded</b>
Ardit Kika	Koha	Local	6
Arlinda Mehmeti	Kallxo	Local	6
Besnik Veliu	Gazeta Express	Local	6
Doruntine Baftiu	Radio Free Europe	International	5
Jetlir Buja	Nacionale	Local	5
Milica Stojanovic	Balkan Insight	Regional	8
Përparim Isufi	Balkan Insight	Regional	7
Serbeze Haxhiaj	Balkan Insight	Regional	6
Vjosa Çerkini	Deutsche Welle	International	5
Xhorxhina Bami	Balkan Insight	Regional	5

*Note.* Regional level refers to the Balkan region and Local level refers to Kosovo.

Given the pre-attained knowledge of Kosovo mediascape, it was imperative to explain the levels locality mentioned on the table to clarify the diversity of media and the reasons why the specific outlets were selected.

### **Local Level**

As taken from a similar reconstruction study to justify the selection of these specific media portals: “We picked the media channels and outlets that presumably had the most significant impact on the national political and media agenda” (Hoxha, & Hanitzsch, 2018, p. 52). For example, considering Gazeta Express, Hoxha (2020, p. 8) claimed that “this is estimated as the most popular media outlet and portal due to its celebritization of news.” According to Lumi and Selimi (2018, p. 6), “GazetaExpress.com appears to be the most widely read online newspaper in Kosovo, 34% of surveyed respondents state that gazetaexpress.com is the online newspaper (the portal) that they read.”

Furthermore, to strengthen validity and credibility amongst journalistic quality, Kallxo is a “joint project of the organizations Internews Kosova, the Balkan

Investigative Journalism Network (BIRN) and the Anti-Corruption Agency, financially supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).” (Kallxo, n.d, para. 1-2) Kallxo’s reputation is justifiable in terms of its accessibility to the transitional justice system, both BIRN and Internews Kosova are “the only civil society organizations in Kosovo that have scope in all Kosovo courts where they monitor the performance of judges, prosecutors and other employees of the justice system since 2008.” (Kallxo, n.d, para. 1-2)

According to Hoxha (2020), Koha Ditore, or Koha for short, is considered to be in the top 5 media portals in Kosovo based on Facebook followers (644,000). This makes up a third of Kosovo’s population (1.8 million). Faton Ismajli (2020, p. 28) highlights that “Koha Ditore and Zëri newspapers have been selected because of their importance in the Kosovo media market”. Additionally, when Koha’s newspaper was still in production, a 2010 survey held by KIPRED and OSCE found that Koha was the most-read newspaper in Kosovo, read by 41% of the respondents.

While Nacionale does not hold the same mass following on Facebook such as Koha and Gazeta Express (1.2 million), it is widely known to be the most-rapid growing media portal in Kosovo, led by one of Gazeta Express’ co-founders, Berat Buzhala, having already amassed almost 150,000 followers on Facebook since 2022. Based on the information presented for the media at the local level, it was necessary to select these four that identifiably had the highest impact on the national political and media agenda.

### **Regional Level**

Balkan Insight is chosen repeatedly with four journalists from the media portal, due to its reputation as “the leading news site covering the Western Balkans Region - a product of BIRN” (Popovska & Ristoska, 2015, p. 71). They have won numerous EU awards for Investigative Journalism in the Balkans, the most out of any media outlet in the entire region. The outlet proclaims that their reporting is done through “objective and timely reporting,” paying “special attention to some major topics – transitional justice, media freedom, rule of law, organized crime and corruption and ecology.” (BIRN, 2023, para. 8) According to Reporters Without Borders (2023, para. 2), online news portals in Kosovo “include strong brands such as BIRN,” thus relaying the

credibility of BIRN's Balkan Insight. Covering the entire Balkan region, therefore, shapes their reporting on a regional level, rendering it necessary to focus the remaining media outlets on either an international or local level.

### **International Level**

The presence of international broadcasters can be “defined as tools of “public diplomacy,” in the sense that they are entrusted by an executive or legislative authority with the responsibility for developing a program for foreign countries” (Fielder & Frere, 2016, p. 70), where their coverage tends to reach the wider public in cases such as Kosovo. The selection of international media depended on their reach and coverage in Kosovo. Deutsche Welle (DW) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) are present in Kosovo daily through their wire service provided in Albanian and Serbian languages, so including their journalists in the study was relevant. DW is known as Germany's public, state-owned non-profit international broadcaster, producing content in 30 different languages on its services, which include radio, television, and digital platforms (Limbourg, 2019). “The broadcaster reaches 100 million people worldwide on a weekly basis,” (Bergmann, 2014, as cited by Połowska-Kimunguyi & Gillespie, 2016, p. 256) and its digital platforms are increasingly growing in reachability, providing “services to 37 million weekly users, represent one of DW's fastest-growing media as more people access content through mobile-based applications and social media” (Workneh, 2022, p. 325).

Like DW, RFE is also a state-funded international media organization backed by the United States Government; however, it is registered as a private, non-profit corporation. Since its creation in 1949, specifically curated to fight communism, RFE has become a means “to promote democratic values by providing accurate, uncensored news and open debate in countries where a free press is threatened and disinformation is pervasive” (Blinken & Lipavský, 2023, para. 4). Former U.S Senator John McCain had also credited RFE with their work: “Historians now acknowledge that the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe were major contributors to the bringing down the then Soviet Union. There's no doubt about it.” (U.S Agency for Global Media, 2023) Headquartered in Prague, Czechia, with 17 local bureaus worldwide, RFE reports in 27 different languages to 23 different countries worldwide, including Kosovo. In the fiscal

year 2022, RFE reached a global audience of over 40 million. (RFE, 2023) Furthermore, “RFE is credited with conveying a tremendous impact on the world: “As the United States has sought to influence foreign populations since the 1990s, and especially those in the Arab and Muslim worlds after 11 September 2001, “RFE and RL are often cited as models of successful foreign information programs.” (Johnson, 2018). Therefore, including an RFE journalist from Kosovo in the study was relevant.

### **Online Media in Kosovo**

To justify further the selection of solely online media, Mehmeti (2021) portrays its relevance in Kosovo, noting that “the youngest, ages 18–29, prefer getting information through online media – news web portals, online news magazines/ blogs (53% use them daily)” (p. 8) and further recording that 45% of all respondents in the survey answered yes to their reliance on online media as a main source of information. Furthermore, the presence of newspaper media in Kosovo has become almost extinct: “Kosovo has also witnessed a major technological development that has affected the media as well and has led some of them to extinguish print versions and remain only online” (Ismajli, 2020, p. 214). Further surveys conducted in Kosovo also determined the dominance of online media: when respondents were asked about their preferred method of access for information, 94% argued they “read the news in online newsletters (portals)” (Lumi & Selimi, 2018, p. 5). Kosovo, as cited by RSF (2023), has a “pluralistic and vivid media market” (2023, para. 2), which allows for online media to become a considerably dominant sphere of Kosovo’s mediascape, playing a multifaceted role in agenda-setting with pertinence to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and the transitional justice process. The selected articles were analyzed with both quantitative and qualitative methods. The next section explains the procedures.

### ***3.3 Quantitative Method***

TJ’s role in shaping Kosovo’s transitioning society can be best determined by framing analysis. Reese (2001, p.11) defines frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world.” Understanding framing theory through the lens of

journalistic practices in the Western Balkans is best represented by Entman's (1993) pioneering work where frames are dictated by the practice of selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Essentially, framing can infer and regulate how the audience in Kosovo is influenced by media, as per Gamson and Modiglian (1989, p. 2), "media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists... develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse." This 'meaning' can be enveloped via media or individual frames, depending on the nature of the theory meant to be examined. Selecting whether media or individual frames are purposely meant to be analyzed in TJ frames is also a key component of the relevant methodology, as the framing typology sets a precedent for deductive coding. Entman (1991) categorized media frames as "attributes of the news itself" (p. 7) and individual frames as "information-processing schemata" (p.7). In this methodology, solely media frames were researched and identified. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p. 143), media frames are "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events... The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue". Media frames can essentially act as a working routine for Kosovo journalists to identify and analyze information, allowing them to "package it for efficient relay to their audiences" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Understanding how Kosovo journalists package their information and disperse it to the public can play a major role in discovering media frames that represent TJ.

In the quantitative methodology, the media frames act as the dependent variable, as the practices of journalists in Kosovo partaking in the study are responsible, as the independent variable, for shaping the media frames themselves based on their routines and habits involved in reporting. Scheufele (2000) mentions five factors that can influence how a journalist reports on any given issue: "social norms and values, organizational pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines, and ideological or political orientations of journalists" (p. 307). In this case, all five pertain to TJ and how it can be decoded via deductive coding through content analysis. Matthes and Kohring (2008) published a study examining the methodological

approaches to examining media frames, pinpointing five specific ones, four being inductive approaches, whilst the last, being ‘deductive approach,’ fits the realm of the methodological implications of the study. Deductive studies tend to “theoretically derive frames from the literature and code them

in standard content analysis” (Matthes & Kohring, 2008, p. 262). The quantitative approach based itself deductively, aiming to decipher and determine whether it exists, and to what extent it exists in practice under the coverage of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict.

In order to understand and compartmentalize how to create a deductive codebook for TJ, it is imperative to present how media frames relate to aspects of TJ, such as conflict and accountability. For example, in a seminal deductive study carried out by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), 3,000 newspaper and television stories were analyzed via content analysis to detect frames in the coverage of meetings in Amsterdam between European leaders in 1997. Five news frames were investigated for their frequency: “attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 93). These are also loosely based on Neuman et al. (1992) identification of five similar frames, however, the most distinct difference is that Semetko and Valkenburg replace Neuman et.al ‘powerlessness’ frame for ‘attribution of responsibility,’ which was correlated to the ‘accountability’ frame in TJ in the current methodology. In Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), ‘attribution of responsibility’ frame is defined as presenting “an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group” (p. 96). Furthermore, the conflict frame entails grabbing the audience’s attention by placing emphasis on any given discord between individuals, groups or institutions, whilst the human interest frame is responsible for attaching a humanization of the conflict at hand, such as evoking an emotional response by dramatizing the issue. These frames serve as a precedent for the formulation of the TJ frames used in the quantitative methodology.

According to Linström and Marais (2012), researchers using deductive coding for framing analysis often use standard news frames as previously introduced by Neuman et al. (1992) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). In this case, the frames monitored in the provided articles incorporate themes on TJ as mentioned in the literature review and theoretical framework. Furthermore, “the researcher can decide to

identify either only a dominant frame in each of the news articles, or a dominant and secondary frame in each of the news articles” (Linström & Marais, 2012, p. 30). In this case, since it can be common for more than one frame of TJ to be present in an article, it is best to select both the dominant and secondary frame in each article, if present. The key firsthand is to identify if any TJ frames are present, and categorize them accordingly in addition to whether there is an existing secondary frame. Given that the quantitative methodology is conducted deductively, it is essential to be specific about what constitutes a frame. For that reason, Cappella and Jameson’s (1997) explain that a frame shall:

have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics; it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice; it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames; a frame must be recognised by others and not be a figment of a researcher’s imagination. (Cappella & Jameson, 1997, in Linström & Marais, 2012, p. 30)

Based on these aforementioned traits of what a frame constitutes, the unit of analysis features the entire textual component of each article presented, including the headline, sub-headings, captions. Since frames have not yet been identified for TJ, the categorization below in Table 2 presents each frame that was deductively researched via Sweeney et al. (2020) case study on Kosovo and Andresen et al. (2017) pioneer study on TJ. The derivation of these frames can be identified in the preceding literature review and theoretical framework.

**Table 2**

*TJ frames with definitions attached*

<b>TJ Frame</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Formal Accountability</b>	Identifying conflict-related crimes relating to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and mentioning the guilty parties of the conflict-related issue (individual, group or institution) based on clearly communicated evidence by official statements.
<b>Retributory Justice</b>	Use of hostile, provoking or subjective language towards the

	guilty party, suggestive of ‘vengeance tactics’ and calling explicitly for justice to be served in a conflict-related issue by attaching solution-oriented reporting that brings the ‘accused’ to justice.
<b>Educational</b>	Providing more than just a background context to the audience, educating on conflict-related processes such as transitional justice mechanisms, conflict-related dialogue (Brussels) and institutional procedures.
<b>Activist</b>	Utilization of ‘activist’ language that seeks to promote and spread awareness over a certain issue, taking on an ‘advocate’ role greater than a Western journalist would.
<b>Reconciliation</b>	Usage of solution-oriented journalism that suggests indirectly or directly to provide a peaceful and harmless solution to the conflict or how the audience might perceive the conflict and ethnic relations.
<b>Historical Accounting</b>	Article plays a role in contributing to history itself, providing a detailed description of an event that occurred during the Kosovo-Serbia conflict that is otherwise not known to the public beforehand. Plays a role in truth-seeking due to inefficiency of truth commissions.
<b>Self-Censorship</b>	Usage of language in the text that seeks to de-escalate the conflict or tension by preventing oneself from inflammatory journalism. Language intends to minimize and suppress any possible inflammation of conflict-related issues.
<b>Promotion of Victims’ Rights</b>	Providing testimonies of victims of sexual assault, rape and other war crimes that is framed in a such a way to bring ‘reparatory justice’ to the victims, providing information on mechanisms that lead for justice to be delivered or for victims to seek help.

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While editorial pressure is also a component of TJ, it is nearly impossible to uncover editorial pressure by solely analyzing the article’s textual content. This remaining component was uncovered through the interview process. While it is difficult to fully confirm whether these frames are present in journalism practices, the reconstruction interviews serve as the core findings of the dissertation whilst the results of the framing analysis serve as a supplement. According to Morse (2010, p. 484), “the supplementary component provides explanation or insight within the context of the core component, but for some reason the supplementary component cannot be interpreted or utilized alone.” The reason being in this dissertation is due to the limited number of articles to be coded for frames, in which case research conducted solely via framing

analysis tends to utilize hundreds or even thousands of articles to support the claim of any conceived frame. However, in this dissertation it is seemingly far more relevant to identify journalistic practices via the reconstruction process, while the TJ frames serve as a precedent for the qualitative method.

In order to code for these frames, it is crucial to register that deductive codes come from a theoretical or conceptual framework (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019), in which case the methodology uses Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000, p. 98) approach, where they "developed a series of 20 questions to which the coder had to answer yes (1) or no (0). Each question was meant to measure one of five news frames." The questions allow the coding process to easily identify via cluster analysis patterns of similar elements that exist within each frame, since "when some frame elements group together systematically in a specific way, they form a certain pattern that can be identified across several texts in a sample" (Matthes & Kohring, 2008, p. 268). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) also found it necessary to include a minimum of three questions for each frame to identify whether it existed in any given article in order to identify a cluster of patterns that lead to frame recognition. Through the questions, the researcher also considered concepts of 'frame setting' and 'frame sending': "Frame setting implies that journalists mostly frame their coverage in line with their personal interpretations of what is at issue. Frame sending denotes the practice of merely relaying the frames as presented by different public actors" (Brüggemann, 2014, p. 64).

The divergence between frame setting and frame sending is revealed through the latter stage of the dissertation's research through interview to extract the journalist's interpretation of whether they report through frame setting or frame sending. In Table 3, the questions for each frame that were used to code the articles are presented, following a further explanation of how the results of (1) yes and (0) no were analyzed for the findings and discussion.

**Table 3**

Questions used for coding the articles via framing analysis

Frame	Identifying Questions
<b>Formal Accountability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="555 1839 1385 1899">1. Does the article feature an official statement from an institution citing fault as its primary source?</li> <li data-bbox="555 1899 1385 1935">2. Does the article identify a conflict-related issue based on factual and</li> </ol>

	<p>visual evidence?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Does the article utilize neutral language to hold the guilty party accountable?</li> <li>4. Does the article present any documentative evidence?</li> </ol>
<b>Retributory Justice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article convey hostile or subjective language that clearly reveals the journalists' interpretation of the conflict-related issue?</li> <li>2. Does the article leak any unofficial or unconfirmed information that could ignite an escalation in ethnic tension between Serbs and Albanians?</li> <li>3. Does the article call for 'justice' to the guilty party in a highly suggestive manner, providing a 'solution-oriented approach'?</li> <li>4. Can the article's tone be deciphered based on the journalists' ethnic allegiance?</li> </ol>
<b>Educational</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the language used in the article appear more 'educational' than journalistic, similar to what one might find in a textbook or information-based source?</li> <li>2. Does the journalist take more time in providing background context than is normally needed for such articles?</li> <li>3. Does the journalist take the time to define terms or explain processes and mechanisms pertaining to transitional justice mechanisms, conflict-related dialogue (Brussels), and institutional procedures?</li> <li>4. Does the article incorporate 'experts' on the topic to provide more information on a given topic?</li> </ol>
<b>Activist</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article align itself more with activist journalism rather than objective reporting?</li> <li>2. Is it obvious that the journalist is making an attempt to spread awareness of the issue through the article?</li> <li>3. Does the article intend to promote or advocate a certain topic through strong language?</li> <li>4. Is there a consistent tone of condescension or contempt towards a particular group or perspective, undermining the credibility of the reporting?</li> </ol>
<b>Reconciliation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article make an attempt to de-escalate ethnic violence or tension through humanization?</li> <li>2. Does the article make an attempt to de-escalate ethnic violence or tension through solution-oriented peace journalism?</li> <li>3. Does the story include an Albanian journalist reporting positively about Serbians and vice versa?</li> <li>4. Does this article include features of constructive journalism?</li> </ol>
<b>Historical Accounting</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article seek to inform the audience about the past, specifically something that has not been recorded before?</li> <li>2. Does the article present itself similar to the form of a 'testimony' in court due to the failures of truth-seeking commissions and transitional justice mechanisms?</li> <li>3. Does the article articulate itself in a manner similar to historical text?</li> <li>4. Does the article aim to portray a comprehensive account of the event in a narrative form?</li> </ol>
<b>Self-Censorship</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article employ extremely neutral language, more than what is necessary in regard to formal accounting?</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Does the journalist utilize both sides of the conflict, thus providing a voice to the 'guilty' party?</li> <li>3. Does the article actively avoid any language that could be misconstrued as inflammatory or retributory?</li> <li>4. Does the article exhibit an unusually high level of avoiding mention of ethnic lines?</li> </ol>
<b>Promotion of Victims' Rights</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the article make an effort to list out victims' rights?</li> <li>2. Does the article play an 'advocacy role' in delivering justice to the victims?</li> <li>3. Does the article provide a voice to the victims themselves (as a source)?</li> <li>4. Are the victims the primary source in the article?</li> </ol>

*Created by the author*

Based on the questions presented in Table 3, the researcher coded each article by responding to the questions as follows, marking (1) and (0), with four questions corresponding to each frame. According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), only frames that are higher than 0.50 are considered relevant as a possible frame; therefore, a frame must receive more than 2 (1) responses to be considered a dominant frame (average of 0.75 or higher), while a supplementary frame must require at least two (1) from the coder in order to be considered supplementary or an average of 0.50 or higher. If there is no dominant frame, only a supplementary frame (0.50) in the article, then a TJ frame is not prevalent in the article. Though in the referenced Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) study, three questions were utilized to identify a frame; however, since this is the first study in which TJ frames are attempted to be identified, it was necessary to add a fourth question and certify whether a frame exists, setting 0.50 as the cutoff. The researcher analyzed each article and marked 1 or 0 for each answer; furthermore, averaged the responses for each frame at the end of each coded article to identify which frames cross the 0.75 and 0.50 threshold. Additionally, the results of each frame across the 59 samples were averaged in order to provide a clearer depiction of which frames are more common across the three-month time period covering topics related to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Based on the recurrence of the frames, the reconstruction interview was adjusted according to the results of the coded frames.

### ***3.4 Qualitative Method***

Understanding how journalists construct their stories and interpret their reporting is essential for expanding on how TJ exists in Kosovo and the Western Balkans. In this regard, it is recognized that content analysis cannot suffice for identifying journalistic practices “since one cannot infer processes from products” (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, p. 48), and specifically to this research, it is considered even more limited due to its lack of ability to observe sensitive or newfound topics, such as TJ. Both Manning (2001) and Reich and Barnoy (2016) claim that content analysis alone is inappropriate for the purpose of production studies. Thus, this thesis uses a qualitative approach for an improved understanding of TJ in its current context and practice. Reich and Barnoy (2016) assert that to understand journalistic content and work, the most ideal piece of the news chain to study is the journalists themselves. Consequently, the most suitable method for the purposes of this research is reconstruction interview, a practice where

A sample of journalists describe their own production process, reflecting on aspects that cannot easily be observed in their published output, such as the contribution of different sources, technologies, and news reporting practices. This kind of ‘reverse engineering’ can help uncover and understand journalists’ logic behind their news items, including priorities, considerations, judgments, norms, resources, and (other) constraints. (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, p. 477)

By asking the journalists who wrote the articles, the understanding of TJ and the existence of its frames can be solidified and confirmed for further research. The reconstruction method is capable of capturing the complexity and simplicity of the journalistic processes, such as its “idiosyncratic, chaotic, and surprising elements” while also its “simplicity, linearity, and structured nature” (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, p. 478). Moreover, the rapid transformation of the digital age in journalism has led to an abundance of its capacity to obtain information, gather sources, collect data and fight disinformation, meaning there is a wide array of possibilities that can lead to the formulation of news-reporting, since by the end of any article “these combinations are

usually reduced to no more than two or three contacts with sources, using one technology or another.” (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, 478). Reich and Barnoy (2016) also claim that it is becoming more and more difficult to observe and research journalism processes through conventional methods, which explains the need for a reconfiguration of such methods.

The pressures of journalistic work today involve shorter deadlines, diminished quality in their work, the rapidness of news circulation, and lack of funding to hire more journalists, which therefore according to Reich and Barnoy (2016, p. 478): “journalists find themselves compromising professional and ethical standards, employing, for example, ‘cut and paste’ journalism, or publishing ‘viral’ stories they do not deem sufficiently newsworthy.” This stands to reason as to why framing analysis in the quantitative method is only considered to be supplementary to the reconstruction interviews’ results. Past studies utilizing reconstruction interviews have also been known to use a mixed method approach, combining content analysis in order to uncover the boundaries “between reporting and aggregation” (Anderson, 2013, p. 1014) by interviewing journalists themselves and analyzing their work.

Once the journalists have agreed to conduct the reconstruction interview for this thesis, the articles were coded to prepare the design of the conversation. Following Reich and Barnoy’s (2016) recommendation, the reconstruction interviews were carried out face-to-face. researcher traveled to Pristina, Kosovo, to conduct the interviews through a mixture of open-ended and specific questions about each article from the sample. Interviews took place in cafes across Pristina. Reich and Barnoy recommend ‘limiting’ 8-11 items (articles) per interviewee; however in this sampling size, only 5-8 were collected due to time constraints and the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire that caused interviews to not only go beyond 60-75 minutes as prescribed by Reich and Barnoy, but 90-120 minutes.

Based on the results of the framing analysis, each interview conducted with the ten participating journalists is accompanied by a questionnaire designed to ‘guide’ the semi-structured interview and understand the decision-making process behind the journalists’ work. The flexibility of reconstruction interviews allows for researcher privilege in designing a method that fits into the criteria of the dissertation’s topic.. “This includes any aspect of reliance on sources, technologies, practices, and any

considerations, resources, and constraints that were part of this process” (Reich & Barnoy, 2016, p. 482). Reich and Barnoy (2016) also describe how reconstruction interviews are held in non-peaceful periods of media coverage such as conflict, as it is difficult to contact a large number of journalists, consolidate news items and gather a research plan on short notice. Therefore, they recommend preparing a “contingent research plan” (2016, p. 485) to prevent obstacles.

Combined with the results from the framing analysis, the questions formulated for the reconstruction interview adhered to these central themes that play a role in how Kosovo journalists develop their articles in relation to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Since the questions were dependent on the content of the article in combination with TJ themes, the interviews were specifically catered to each journalist’s work; however, two randomly selected questions from each interview are presented below in Table 4 in order to present a clearer understanding of how the interviews were conducted:

**Table 4**

*Sampled questions from each interview with participants*

<b>Journalist</b>	<b>Sampled Questions</b>
Ardit Kika	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did you approach framing Rama’s intervention in the Association of Serb Municipalities?</li> <li>2. What is the reasoning for the sequencing of sources: Escobar, Milatovic, Arifi, Bislimi?</li> </ol>
Serbeze Haxhiaj	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you feel you did a sufficient job of keeping the report balanced between Serb war crimes and KLA revenge attacks?</li> <li>2. Why does the focus shift from a Montenegrin sheltering Albanians to an Albanian sheltering Albanians and Roma?</li> </ol>
Jetlir Buja	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you see yourself illustrating Lajcak’s positioning in the piece?</li> <li>2. In the end, who are you suggesting to be ‘brought to justice?’</li> </ol>
Doruntina Baftiu	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did you change the names in the story or felt it was necessary not to maintain confidentiality?</li> <li>2. Do you think this article aims to seek accountability for violence against journalists?</li> </ol>
Besnik Veliu	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think your opinion on Lajcak and Escobar is present in this piece?</li> <li>2. Why did you pick these certain parts of Samorkov’s analysis to report on?</li> </ol>
Vjosa Çerkini	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your reasoning for the usage of the word ‘ethnic Serbs’ in this piece?</li> <li>2. Were you afraid of retaliatory threats after publishing such an article</li> </ol>

	about Albanian and Serbian reconciliation?
Xhorxhina Bami	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which voices are most important to add when it comes to situations such as these, who do you look for in terms of statements or comments?</li> <li>2. Who do you think is most responsible for protecting journalists and how do you think the article presents it?</li> </ol>
Milica Stojanovic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does this article advocate or promote criticism for the label of 'terrorists'?</li> <li>2. Do you believe that this article employs activism for the victims of the war crimes tribunal?</li> </ol>
Perparim Isufi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do you choose to use the word 'cautious' in the headline?</li> <li>2. Do you believe this article represents a balanced coverage of both sides of the dispute?</li> </ol>
Arlinda Mehmeti	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you feel any need for self-censorship when writing the crimes of UCK? Due to fear of reactions from Kosovo Albanians?</li> <li>2. How did you approach picking the quotes from the trials? Which do you think are most important?</li> </ol>

*Created by the author*

It is lastly relevant to explain how the interviews were transcribed and analyzed the qualitative analysis of the interviews undertakes on a deductive approach in the form of deductive thematic analysis. Consequently, in order to build further on TJ theory, inductive thematic analysis was also incorporated, combined with deductive in order to produce enhanced results. Firstly, the deductive thematic analysis allowed for addressing existing themes within TJ that was evident in the results of the interviews. As Azungah (2018, p. 11) describes, "the deductive approach uses an organizing framework comprising of themes for the coding process," while Thomas (2006, p. 238) describes the inductive "refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher." While TJ themes do indeed exist, it is also relevant to look for new concepts and themes within the interview transcripts. Thematic analysis was selected for the mixed deductive/inductive approach because it allows for the data to be analyzed in such a way that particular themes that pertain to the topic and research question are identified (Braun & Clarke, 2008). Given these considerations, the next chapter presents the findings.

## 4 Findings and Analysis

The following chapter presents the results of the supplementary quantitative research together with the core research governed by qualitative research. The study set out to answer the following research questions by analyzing the findings:

- 1) To what extent are transitional journalism practices used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?
- 2) To what extent are transitional journalism frames used amongst Kosovo journalists in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict?

The frequency of transitional journalism frames is presented via the coding results, which is further connected with the results of the reconstruction interviews in the qualitative findings chapter. The first section of the chapter sought to answer the second research question and provide further context for the first overarching research question.

### *4.1 Quantitative Findings*

The coding for the quantitative method was conducted before the reconstruction interviews, as described in the methodology, and completed over a two-week period in June 2023, once all 10 participants had consented to participate in the study. Articles were analyzed thoroughly before allotting a (1) or (0) value to each of the four questions that corresponded to a frame (Table 3).

The results from the four questions in each frame were averaged into an amount ranging from 0-1 and further analyzed to determine whether certain frames passed the dominant and supplementary threshold to be considered as such.. However, the identity of the journalists and media portals that utilized these frames the most are not reported, as this is not a commonplace practice in framing analysis. The graph below, Figure 1, shows the results for the dominant frames that were found across the 59 articles.

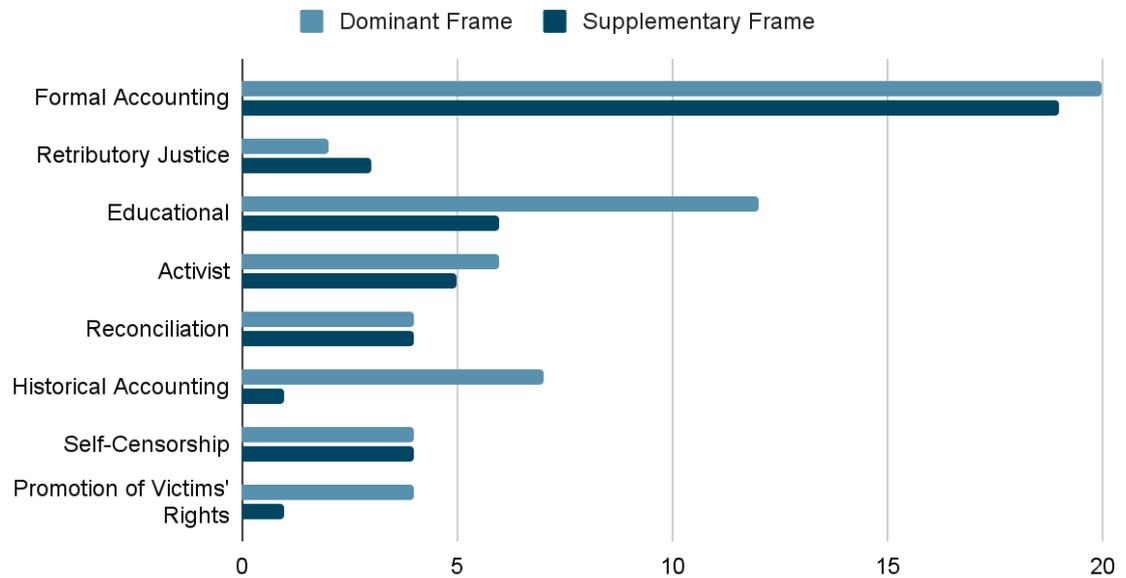
**Figure 1***Results from framing analysis via deductive coding***# of Coded Frames***Created by the author*

Table 5 offers a more holistic oversight of the results from the quantitative method, listing them from highest to lowest based on the frequency of dominant frames found through the coding process.

**Table 5***Frequency of Dominant Frames*

Frame	# of Dominant Frames	% of Frequency
Formal Accountability	20	33%
Educational	12	20%
Historical Accounting	7	12%
Activist	6	10%
Reconciliation	4	7%
Promotion of Victims' Rights	4	7%
Self Censorship	4	7%
Retributory Justice	2	4%

<b>Total:</b>	<b>59</b>	
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*Created by the author*

Given the presentation of the coding results, the chapter now departs to provide a deeper contextualized analysis of how it pertains to TJ.

#### **4.1.1 Analysis of Dominant Frame Results**

As shown in Table 5, the most frequent frame found in the analysis is formal accountability. This reveals that journalists are most likely to hold responsible or guilty parties accountable for their actions without, as noted by Sweeney et al, (2020, p. 495), “straying into more retributory territory.” The theoretical framework establishes that seeking accountability is most commonly found when Kosovo journalists identify “instances of conflict-related crimes” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 495). Seemingly, formal accountability is most closely related to objective journalism mentioned in the literature review since it is concretely embedded in the reportage of official evidence rather than anything pertaining to speculation or assumptions (unless quoted by officials). Additionally, the results from the WJS survey that was utilized for the pilot study on TJ (Andresen et al., 2017) signify that Kosovo journalists are the most likely out of all Western Balkan countries to adhere to professional standards. On a scale of 1 to 5, Kosovo journalists were asked how they view the importance of being ‘a detached observer’ and reporting ‘things as they are,’ scoring higher than all the other Western Balkan countries featured in the study.

However, drawing on this linkage between formal accountability and reporting objectively, the frustration that comes from journalists in Kosovo when it comes to formal accountability reporting has been noted in previous studies: “Two Albanian-language journalists (both in their 20s) expressed frustration about feeling the need to ‘balance’ the actions of the ethnic Serb forces and the KLA during the conflict” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 495). Therefore, the need to consolidate equity in terms of providing accountability from both sides can be frustrating, for journalists due to ethnic allegiance. Andresen (2015) further incorporates the notion of patriotic journalism by asserting that ethnic Albanian nationalism has been a key factor in influencing Kosovo media, given that “the notion of national identity among media workers has been

historically strong in media in Kosovo” (Andresen, 2015, p. 192) Yet based on the results of the framing analysis, it is possible to conclude that patriotic journalism is not as prevalent in Kosovo media anymore compared to its early days in the 1990s and 2000s due to the presence of the formal accountability frame. While it may be felt internally to write according to ethnic lines due to being perceived as a “traitor to their community” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 493), the framing analysis, however, infers that Kosovo journalists are respectfully adhering to professional standards given formal accountability’s dominance. Given that 33% of the articles coded contained a dominant formal accountability frame, it is proper to confirm its prevalence in TJ, thus allowing TJ to still identify itself under professional journalistic measures.

Nonetheless, frames found in the remaining articles present a different story when considering TJ and the dissertations’ theoretical framework. The second most frequent dominant frame found in the analysis was the educational frame, found a total of 12 times throughout the 59 articles. According to TJ literature, the role of being an educator is highly relevant to TJ, since TJ is defined as “more activist and educational:” (Sweeney, et .al., 2020, p. 489) “In transitional journalism, the ambitions are higher and more specific; roles like “activist”, “public interest protector” and “educator” are linked to the transitional phases that society is going through (Andresen et al., 2017, p. 618).

The presence of the educational frame works really well with the existing TJ literature and the hypotheses, as it cements the role of the journalist acting as an educator in their work, which can be considered to exceed the role of a traditional journalist, undertaking the ‘double’ or ‘extended’ role of a transitional journalist. This concludes that journalists also took the time to provide more background information on the story rather than what is necessary for a traditional journalist reporting the news. Journalists, in their articles where the educational frame was dominant, elaborated meticulously on various mechanisms and concepts that pertained more towards the news-reporting style of an ‘explainer’ rather than accountability reporting on conflict-related issues. In some cases, journalists fully explained transitional justice mechanisms and analytical information regarding the conflict in order to make it easier for the reader to understand. Since 20% of the articles coded were found to have an educational frame, it is relevant to confirm that the role of ‘educator’ is prevalent in TJ, especially in the recent coverage of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict in 2023.

Thirdly, while not as high in frequency as the formal accountability and educational frames, was the historical accounting frame, found seven times throughout the articles. Historical accounting refers to when the journalist attempts to play a role in chronicling history that has not yet been officially confirmed or revealed by a truth commission or transitional justice mechanisms. This frame becomes active in reporting when there is an absence of a truth commission, which is the case in Kosovo. One Kosovo Albanian journalist stated that it was “absolutely the duty of the media” (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 498) to publish experiences from the 1998-99 war, to push further the cementing of the truth of what crimes and atrocities people suffered during the war that has not yet been brought to light. Other interviewees that participated in the first TJ study on the Kosovo mediascape (Sweeney et al., 2020) also credited the media with playing a role as a ‘substitutive truth commission.’

The articles coded for the dominant historical accounting frames featured stories of victims from the 1998-99 war, specifically those of sexual violence and ethnic cleansing carried out by Serbian forces and KLA rebels. Even in this case, as Sweeney et al. (2020) implied through one of its interviewees that Kosovo Albanian journalists that wrote about Kosovo Serb victims were seen as traitors (and vice versa); however, upon coding, it was found that despite the implication,, Kosovo Albanian and Serbian journalists were not afraid to write about crimes committed by their own ethnicity. Another interviewee in the aforesaid study labeled the Kosovo Albanian media as “ruthless” since they would go as far as even to expose the crimes committed by their war heroes, the KLA. Historical accounting as a frame is especially common since there is especially no effort made on the part to persecute Serb troops for their crimes due to the failure of national and international justice mechanisms. However, this can falter into a retributory justice frame instead, depending on the nature of the article and how it portrays or interprets the guilty party:

Several interviewees again said that whilst it would have been good for the media to play a responsible role in historical accounting it had, at several points, instead inflamed tensions. This dovetails with, and also to an extent, overlaps with, the various observations about the media having played a retributive role. (Sweeney et al., 2020, p. 499)

As observed, historical accounting as a dominant frame was present in around 12% of the articles coded. Therefore, it can be determined that this frame also serves to strengthen the hypothesis for the second research question. Kosovo journalists, according to the historical accounting frame, do make an effort to play their part in recording the past and contributing to history itself.

While the activist frame is not as dominant as the educational, it was found in 10% of all articles coded, meaning there is some substance to the activist frame's role in determining TJ practices via framing analysis. As referenced beforehand in the overview of the educational frame's result, TJ literature has documented TJ as having an 'activist role' (Sweeney et al., 2020; Andresen et al., 2017) Journalists tend to see themselves as agents of change, finding what they feel is most important for their readers and attempting to bring about improvements, by being "an advocate for social change." (Andersen et al., 2017, p. 623) As noted in the literature review, journalists in Kosovo and the Western Balkans see their role as essential to the transitioning state of their country in its developing stage, made clear by the activist frame found.

This suggests that Kosovo journalists oftentimes do see their role as somewhat associated with activist journalism, however, there is less interventionism apparent in their work, rendering it more professional than that of activist journalism. Interventionism refers to "the degree to which journalists are visible in a news item" (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011, p. 11). While Western Balkan journalists are "activist motivated" (Andersen et al., 2017, p. 623), they still maintain adherence to professional ethics and standards involved in traditional journalism. Secondly, interventionism also pertains to when journalists take a more active approach in creating or adapting the frames in their work rather than using a passive style and employing already existing frames (Hanitzsch, 2007), moving from the already-existing and researched conflict frames (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2019) to newfound and unresearched TJ frames such as the activist one.

Touching upon the last four remaining dominant frames found in the articles — reconciliation, self-censorship, promotion of victims' rights and retributory justice —, they also serve to solidify the preceding implications of present TJ frames in Kosovo-Serbia conflict's media coverage. While it is not as frequent as the other frames, the lack of frequency can also be explained by TJ literature. When it comes to

reconciliation, the frame questions involved the question, “Does the story include an Albanian journalist reporting positively about Serbians and vice versa?”. Pertaining to this specific question, it is highly unlikely, as pointed out in TJ literature, for journalists to be reporting positively about the opposing ethnicity in the conflict due to being criticized as a ‘traitor’ based on the lines of ethno-journalism or patriotic journalism. Regardless, the lack of frequency of any certain frame does not translate to its absence of practice in Kosovo-Serbia conflict coverage, since this can be tied to the limitations of sampling a small amount of articles (59) or the journalists selected for the study.

Nonetheless, the appearance of the reconciliation, promotion of victims’ rights and self-censorship frame totalling at four times each can also purposely solidify TJ practices via framing analysis. The idea of reconciliation existent within the media coverage conveys that there is a link between TJ and peace journalism, which Sweeney et al. highlights in their work, given that reconciliation suggests that Kosovo journalists attempt to provide solution-oriented reportages that visibly aim to de-escalate tensions between Albanians and Serbians. However, this is done on a lower-scale in comparison to more frequent frames. In TJ literature, reconciliation is viewed as “building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday” (Hayner, 2000, p. 161). One journalist who was interviewed for the previous TJ studies (Sweeney et al., 2020; Andresen et al. 2017) also asserted that it was the media’s responsibility to play a leading role in reconciliation between ethnicities. Journalists’ role in reconciliation will be further examined in the qualitative interpretations of the findings, as one journalist in a previous study (Sweeney et al. 2020) claimed that any efforts to reconcile inter-ethnic tensions in the media could be considered ‘accidental.’

Self-censorship is another key feature of TJ that was found as a frame, though not as often since it is clearly difficult to detect self-censorship, unless the journalists themselves admit to doing so. Whether or not journalists do in fact practice self-censorship based on fear of inflaming tensions is confirmed in the following chapter. Self-censorship has become, however, a commonplace practice in journalism according to Pain and Korin (2020, p. 1) since they claim that journalists “consider self-censorship an integral part of their professional identity.” The use of highly susceptible neutral language and extensive effort to portray a balanced overview of a

conflict-related issue is detectable in framing analysis to a certain extent, as revealed in the results. Lastly, the third frame appearing four times was promotion of victims' rights, which its lack of frequency can be explained by insufficient knowledge among journalists regarding truth commissions, and victims' fear of speaking out due to trauma. Though victims' rights is less likely to be covered in Kosovo mediascape, it is necessary to attribute the role of NGO's that also play a factor in promoting these topics rather than the media itself. However, TJ literature does incorporate TJ practices involved in promoting collective memory and providing a voice for the victims, which can explain why the frame was found a number of times throughout the coding.

Lastly as a dominant frame that was found the least throughout the coding was retributory justice, found only twice, and in any case the specific articles in which the frame was found were opinion pieces written by the journalist themselves. This leaves less room for self-censorship since the views are not representative of the portal but of the individual. Nonetheless, the lack of frequency for retributory justice explains the motivations behind Kosovo journalists to prevent their articles from being inflammatory and contributing to escalation of ethnic tension. As mentioned in the literature review, retributive journalism has led to ethnic violence in the past in Kosovo, therefore journalists find it necessary to abstain themselves from such practices as it devaluates their professional standards and also leads to threats. Use of retributive frames signify that interventionism is highly evident in the piece, as the journalist clearly fails to refrain their consensus from the article. However, when the journalist does attempt to deter from inserting their opinion, the retributory nature can appear in the form of the historical accounting frame (see page blank). Conclusively, the results of the dominant frames paint a clearer picture of what TJ entails, and affirms further the hypotheses that it is prevalent in Kosovo-Serbia conflict media coverage. Elaborating further on the existence of supplementary frames also cements the results further.

#### **4.1.2 Analysis of Supplementary Frame Results**

Table 6 presents the oversight for the frequency of supplementary frames, ranked from highest to lowest.

**Table 6***Frequency of Supplementary Frames*

<b>Frame</b>	<b># of Supplementary Frames</b>
Formal Accountability	19
Educational	6
Activist	5
Reconciliation	4
Self-Censorship	4
Retributory Justice	3
Promotion of Victims' Rights	1
Historical Accounting	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>43</b>

*Created by the author*

While not as crucial to examine as the dominant frames, the existence of supplementary frames can also support research that pursues to identify practices or patterns in journalists (Linström and Marais, 2012). While extensive analysis is not necessary for supporting the presence of TJ practices and frames, it is imperative at the very least, to draw upon their existence that can strengthen and validate TJ's plausibility. Figure 1 and Table 7 present the results of the supplementary frames. Its frequency can also tie into a better understanding of how some frames continue to play a stronger role in TJ than others. The most frequent supplementary TJ frame found in the coding was formal accountability, starring in 19 of the articles, or at 32% frequency.

With formal accountability existing as not only the most frequent dominant frame, but also the most frequent supplementary frame, this cements its importance as the most dominating aspect of TJ. Furthermore, it is apparent that the educational frame also asserts itself as the second most relevant frame in TJ, as it is also the second-most frequent supplementary frame, appearing 6 times or in 10% of all articles. However, it is important to note that the distance between the first most-frequent frame (formal accountability) and second most-frequent frame (educational) is 11 points greater than the distance between the second most frequent and the third most frequent frame

(activist). The diversity amongst the results of the supplementary frames, in addition to the variation, can be attributed to the fact that the supplementary framing threshold (0.5) was only found to be crossed or met in 43 of the 59 articles. The 16 articles unaccounted for simply did not have any supplementary frames, so while formal accounting was the most dominant, the remaining seven supplementary frames vary from a frequency of 1-6.

One key finding to identify is that the retributory justice frame appears more often as a supplementary frame (3), than as dominant (1). This could be interpreted and analyzed as a resistance to diverge oneself to a high level of interventionism. While journalists in Kosovo may have the urge to cater to ethnic interests and deliver justice for inter-ethnic crimes, they feel the need to resign themselves and their opinion into the background for the sake of professional standards instead. Notwithstanding, retributory justice is noted as something that has been reduced in Kosovo media, as it can be linked with hate speech, which according to Andresen (2015) has seen a significant reduction since early days of Kosovo media. The same can also be said for the frequency of the activist supplementary frame, such as that Kosovo journalists also do not want to stray into 'activist journalism' territory (for the sake of professionalism), thus its frame fading into the backdrop of the article's main approach whenever possible.

As to explaining the frequency of reconciliation (4) and self-censorship (4): The same resistance found in retributive justice can also be applied to reconciliation appearing only four times as a supplementary frame, which can allot to Kosovo journalists' drive to mend ethnic tension, however in a more subtle approach via a supplementary reconciliation frame. Considering self-censorship as a supplementary frame, it is imperative to repeat that self-censorship is considerably difficult to identify as a frame, however the neutrality found in articles can point towards a supplementary frame in self-censorship. Given that self-censorship and reconciliation are found under the same frequency as a dominant and supplementary frame, it is permissible to confirm that these two practices in TJ are equal in applicability.

Lastly, the low frequency of historical accounting (1) and promotion of victims rights' (1) can be interpreted as such that the two frames can mostly exist as a dominant frame, commandeering the perspective and scope of the article rather than existing in the background. When journalists employ frames such as these, the frame of the article

is dominant enough under one frame in which a supplementary frame cannot be found as supporting the article's position towards a conflict-related issue. Historical accounting and promotion of victims' rights as a TJ practice in itself is visible and imperative enough for the journalist to cover so much that it does not lead to any other practices becoming identifiable in their journalistic products.

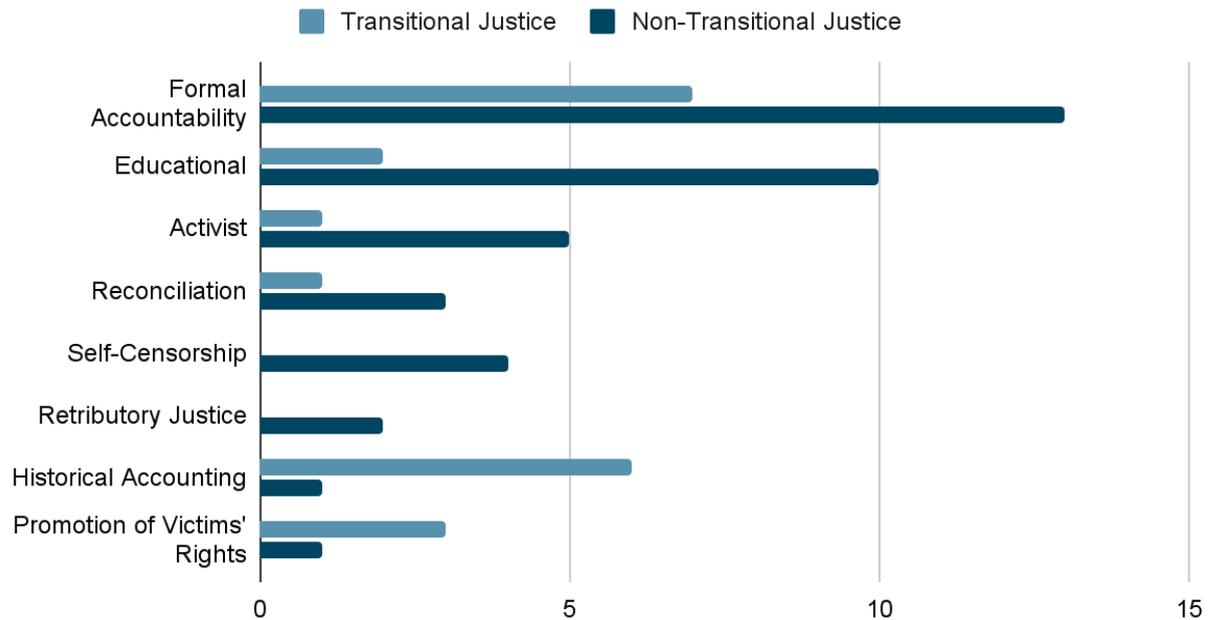
#### **4.1.3 Coverage of Topics Related to Kosovo-Serbia Conflict**

While Andresen et al. (2017) and Sweeney et al. (2020) noting that transitional justice is correlated most strongly with TJ, suggesting that TJ can be identified through transitional justice reporting, the purpose of the analysis aims to detect whether TJ exists not only in transitional justice reporting but also in the wider coverage of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. This included anything relating to the conflict between the two states, such as the war crimes trials, the protests in the north, sexual violence during the 1998-99 war, and more, as outlined in the introduction. Therefore, Figure 2 and Table 8 visualizes the frequency of frames for the articles covering transitional justice mechanisms, to provide a better understanding of whether TJ is identifiable in not only transitional justice coverage, but also in the conflict's coverage as a whole.

**Figure 2**

*Comparison of Transitional Justice coverage vs Non-Transitional Justice coverage*

## Transitional Justice vs Non-Transitional Justice Coverage



The table below also provides further information on the results of the comparison between transitional justice and non-transitional justice media coverage in Kosovo.

**Table 7**

Comparison of Coverage between Transitional Justice and Non-Transitional Justice frames

Frame	Transitional Justice Frequency	Non-Transitional Justice Frequency
Formal Accountability	7	13
Educational	2	10
Activist	1	5
Reconciliation	1	3
Self-Censorship	0	4
Retributory Justice	0	2

Historical Accounting	6	1
Promotion of Victims' Rights	3	1
<b>Total:</b>	20	39

*Created by the author*

Since these articles were either sent in by the journalist or sampled purposively dependent on its relation to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, it cannot be said that the examined articles represent a bigger picture in terms of which issues are focused on the most in the media. The purpose shown here in Figure 2 and Table 8 is to exemplify that TJ also exists not only pertaining to transitional justice but also in the wider scope of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. It is also relevant to point out that the frequency of dominant frames presented for transitional justice coverage provides a deeper context to how journalists approach their work. While it has already been acknowledged that formal accountability is the most frequent frame regardless of the topic related to the conflict, the data above solidifies this claim. Furthermore, highlighting the following two most frequent transitional justice dominant frames is also imperative. Both historical accounting and promotion of victims' rights appear frequently in transitional justice coverage, in almost half of all articles relating to the topic (9 out of 20). This conclusion demonstrates that as presented in TJ literature, (Sweeney et al., 2020, Andresen et al., 2017) historical accounting and promoting victims' rights is a prominent practice that is more likely to be found in transitional justice coverage than other aspects of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict.

## ***4.2 Qualitative Findings***

In this section, the most relevant quotes from ten conducted reconstruction interviews with Kosovo journalists were extracted from the interview transcripts. The themes surrounding TJ, story ideation, story narration, story presentation, interventionism, and framing theory are all present in the deductive and inductive thematic analysis of the interview data. This section is split into different themes, both deductively and inductively coded in order to provide a well-rounded overview of how and under what context Kosovo journalists interpret their journalistic routines in pursuit

of creating their news products. Deductively, certain themes are selected from the literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology to actively structure and elicit relevant information that answered the RQs and validated the hypotheses.

#### **4.2.1 Formal Accountability**

Involving formal accountability as a practice in TJ has been mostly connected to maintaining the Western-implemented professionalism in journalistic standards, relying mainly on official evidence and ‘reporting things as they are.’ This exhibited itself as a common theme throughout the interviews, as it was continuously important for journalists to maintain their etiquette when going through articles and asked how they added certain information or sources. Notably, the common underlying theme attached to formal accountability was the coverage of ‘daily news’ articles, that did not involve any other analysis, commentaries or self-censorship. The key purpose is to keep up to speed with the constant developments occurring within the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, especially in the March-June time period in 2023.

Xhorxhina Bami from Balkan Insight mentioned in one of her news articles that it is simply most important to just “state facts,” however depending on the nature of the facts presented, it can stray into a form of accountability. Such as in the case of one article regarding the indictments against former KLA commanders, it is a journalist’s responsibility to report on them as they are without any further depiction of whether or whether not they might be guilty. However, in the same sense it is necessary to call upon the war crimes tribunals ongoing in the Hague for not being transparent, since it is closed to the media even though it is a public trial. In that sense, Bami considers it as a way of pursuing formal accountability given the legal measures of the cases. While she believes that is important for journalists to point out any “wrongdoings” in the process of transitional justice, she does not believe that their reporting can affect the trials themselves. Bami’s colleague at Balkan Insight, Perparim Isufi also maintained the same semblance of ‘observer’ attitude in formal accountability, stating that “it’s not our job to criticize, especially in news reporting. News should not be like this, we tend to portray the reality of the development as they unfold simply”, referring to his article on the coverage of the protests in the North held by Kosovo Serbs.

For Vjosa Çerkini at DW, presenting evidence is also related to Bami's comments on the matter of formal accountability. Her aim is to also "to just show people facts, from the Albanian side, even from the Serbian side." Attaching both sides of the conflict is crucial in seeking accountability because it maintains objectivity while also allowing the reader to determine for themselves who is guilty in a given situation dependent on the evidence presented by the facts.

Isufi also mentions the case of having to double check and maintain confirmations on the evidence that is being reported regarding conflict related issues, especially when the developments come from other media. Isufi mentions a lack of trust for other media in Kosovo, affirming the need to go further and ascertain any potential developments. In one case, the public broadcaster of Kosovo reported an indictment of the wartime rape of an ethnic Albanian male, only parts of it were revealed and since Isufi mentioned that local media is not taken seriously, he needed to make even "triple checks" to confirm the source. Another colleague at Balkan Insight, Milica Stojanovic, who is Serbian, mentioned that when she covered the Kosovo government's labeling of Kosovo Serb organizations as terrorists, it was problematic as it is not possible to "accuse anyone of being terrorists" when there is no evidence. There is a need to be careful with the wording of how politicians accuse individuals or groups of being 'terrorists' or 'criminals' without any actual conviction legally. This presents another example towards evidence playing a key role in the practice of seeking accountability in TJ.

Doruntina Baftiu at RFE also confirmed this, mentioning her practice of researching even further behind the statements made by police in conflict-related issues, to ensure that there are no inaccuracies in presenting evidence: "But I actually did a lot of researching about this, because the police had mentioned that they were only Serbian for two of them, not three of them, so I had to make sure and really check". Baftiu also mentioned how it is important to attribute any side blaming the other by attributing what they said in quotes, to fully ensure that the 'guilty' party being exposed is not of the opinion or confirmation by the journalist but of the source being quoted.

Another caution pointed out by Stojanovic that highlights formal accountability is the usage of quotation marks in the headlines that allege claims made by both sides of the conflict. In this specific story, Serbia had arrested three policemen in the border area

between Kosovo and Serbia, and the Kosovo government had claimed that the policemen were ‘kidnapped.’ In Stojanovic’s coverage, she alluded to the kidnapping claims in quotation marks, to ensure that there is no evidence yet that pertains to their kidnapping, it still remains a claim by Kosovo officials. When asked whether her opinion on the topic could be visible in the article, Stojanovic replied, “I don’t think it can be seen in the article because I don’t have an opinion, I don’t know if Kosovo or Serbia is telling the truth. I have the vaguest idea of what actually happened.” Stojanovic’s reply ties in with formal accountability as it asserts the idea in TJ that the journalist cannot make any claims or assessments in the Kosovo-Serbia conflict without evidence, in addition to further cementing that their opinion is irrelevant to the style of reporting the article.

One journalist, who did not want to be named in this part, mentions how their lack of trust in Kosovo institutions creates the need to fight against disinformation, especially when it comes to accountability:

I don’t trust Kosovo institutions, about what they say is happening in the North for instance. In April, Kosovo Police released a statement saying it wasn’t true that they shot a Serbian guy. Then a day later they admit that they shot the Serbian. This kind of disinformation happens every time. I don’t believe the institutions. But sometimes, you just have to write what they are saying, even while knowing it is not the truth, even when you have proof that what they are saying is not the truth. But you can’t do that, you have to strategize or you’ll become a target of so many ethno-nationalists out there, especially on the internet. (Journalist, 2023)

According to the journalist, while the urgency to use facts and prevent any disinformation is existent, it is a tough mediascape for Kosovo, journalists, to seek out formal accountability. This is especially given since some journalists have to sacrifice their standards of holding the guilty accountable in order not to be criticized.

Jetlir Buja, an editor at Nacionale, affirmed the importance of preventing any speculation when it came to seeking accountability, demonstrated this:

If you don't have any hard evidence of what happened, or what is going to happen, I believe we should not speculate. For instance, if you learn that Kosovo can become isolated from the international community, you don't know that for sure. It is speculation. (Buja, 2023)

Besnik Velju, a journalist at Gazeta Express, mentions how important it is to play the observer role and stick with only the concepts behind reporting within formal accountability:

As journalists, I don't think it's helpful to be part of the political process. Every actor in the conflict has their own interests, and the situation is very unstable. As a journalist, you just need to judge by the facts that are on the table. You don't know what Kurti is saying in Brussels behind closed doors and you have to take care because he might change his mind after two months. (Velju, 2023)

#### **4.2.2 Editorial Pressure**

Editorial pressure, as outlined in the theoretical framework, is a substantial part of transitional journalism. The demand to fit a certain media's ethnic narrative or their political alignment when it comes to reporting in Kosovo can easily affect the nature of the article. In some cases, editorial pressure involved reconfiguring of certain articles to de-escalate ethnic tension, or to fit the audience reach of that given media portal.

In some cases, editorial rules can determine certain practices that journalists involve in their work. In Xhorxhina Bami's case (Balkan Insight), she mentions that there is a precedent involved in the editorial process that determines how identities are revealed in specific stories pertaining to the arrest of Kosovo Serb criminals.

If there is an article like five years ago about something similar that happened and there was an editorial rule at that time, we just follow

the same editorial rule. We have this issue every time, we don't like to give out the names, but if the state or an institution does so, then we do it. (Bami, 2023)

Jetlir Buja (Nacionale), speaking from an editor's perspective himself, emphasized how there is a lack of quality assurance in Kosovo media due to financial constraints:

You should be able to understand that the media here, the established media, are not actually in a very good state financially, I work with 10 journalists, so the problem is, you do not have much quality control at all in the media outlets. (Buja, 2023)

Buja also mentions the lack of education for journalists and editors themselves can play a heavy impact in inflammatory reporting. This is due to the normalization of inflammatory language from politicians, which lead to journalists and editors believing that it is normal which can in turn, cause more inflammatory reporting. Buja stressed further the importance of proper education so that the media is cautious about how events are reported based on political statements.

In other cases, such as in the interview with Serbeze Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight), editorial suggestions are also made, which is commonplace in an editor's function, irrespective of any 'pressure' being involved. Editors can have an influence on source selection, according to Haxhiaj in one article where an editor asked her to include a certain source because of its relevance the topic regarding war crimes.

An ongoing theme that prevented further analysis or depth to news articles was the impediment of deadlines in Kosovo mediascape, given the rapid development of conflict-related issues that can occur at any moment. According to Besnik Velu (Gazeta Express):

There are so many developments recorded on the (Kosovo-Serbia) dialogue. When you get such a response (from a source), you have to write to translate it and write within 30 minutes. So you just have to write and put the title of what they are saying, because after the article, maybe they will ask for another meeting (in the dialogue). (Velu, 2023)

Ardit Kika (Koha) also elaborated on Veliu's noting of editorial deadlines that can prevent journalists from obtaining better sources or seeking further comments on the development.

I think you don't really have the time to go ask someone, since if there's a trial today, there's not really enough time to go speak to a lawyer or court specialist to comment on the development. Of course, if there's a scandal, you would have to find someone to follow up and get comments, but in this case, it's the same as reporting on daily events; there's just not much time. (Kika, 2023)

Isufi (Balkan Insight) makes note of how editorial guidelines such as the word count can also limit the journalists' capacity in providing more context for news stories, allowing journalists to go deeper and exhibit TJ practices. Isufi, based on a news article relating to the protests in the North, admitted that he could have done things differently in terms of explaining more about the background. However, he made note of mentioning that it is important to take into consideration the word limit of the story, which in his case can be around 400 words in most news stories.

### **4.3.3 Self-Censorship**

Omitting certain information, or wording the story in a certain way in order to prevent oneself from inflammatory reporting that might lead to consequences is another practice found in TJ. The experiences of the interviewees painted a larger picture in understanding how important it is for Kosovo journalists to avoid any possible escalation in tension that might arise from their reporting. The prevalence of self-censorship as a commonplace practice in TJ was evident in the responses. The reactions from readers regarding their reporting, in addition to how the journalists themselves view self-censorship, also provide different perspectives on TJ.

Vjosa Çerkini (DW) mentioned how she came under attack, with people her as a spy of Serbia simply for reporting on a story about ethnic Albanian and ethnic Serbian girls playing football together.

People start attacking me, saying that I am Pro-Serb because I'm going so often to Serbia because I don't only cover Kosovo but Southeastern Europe, so for that reason, it just happens to be where I am. So just because I started learning Serbian, or because I am going to Serbia or the north of Kosovo, and because I have Serbian friends, this is why people are saying I am a spy. I get comments from people telling me to change my name, you are a shame to your family. Even my family criticized me. And it's hard for me, especially because I'm just doing my job. (Çerkini, 2023)

The use of wording and using caution when writing stories was also found to be customary, according to Çerkini. She demonstrated the importance of using the right words and being careful in everything that she writes, maintaining carefulness. Çerkini reiterates that the journalist must be fully aware of what they are saying, the facts that are being used, and whether or not either side will misunderstand the words that are being written. She mentions that

Sometimes I need more time to just think about the words I should use for my stories, but actually, I never censor myself, I'm just very careful in the way I decide about selecting words or what kind of words I should write. I'm not afraid of anything, I just say everything as it is, I'm not afraid of self-censorship. (Çerkini, 2023)

In the aforementioned story about football, Çerkini mentions how the reaction from the story was positive, yet there were parts omitted in which she felt was necessary to maintain the narrative. During a football match between the girls playing, Serbian spectators began cursing and yelling ethnic slurs against Albanians, which Çerkini felt was not needed to add to the article.

Touching upon the idea of wording carefully was another theme found in Isufi's (Balkan Insight) answers, who also pointed out that "we are very cautious about using these kinds of terms," however mentioning in certain cases, it is unavoidable. Depending on the article, it is difficult to avoid using ethnic terminology such as "ethnic Serbs, Kosovo Serbs, Kosovo Albanians, ethnic Albanians", according to Isufi. He reiterated that as a journalist you cannot incite emotion in the reader, or transmit any possible emotion that journalists have. He mentioned in one article covering the protests in the North that at the same time, his colleagues were under threat there. "The emotion could have been transmitted in my writing, but I handled it very carefully. As a journalist you cannot take into consideration your reaction, you have to be strict with yourself when dealing with sensitivity of news."

Arlinda Mehmeti (Kallxo) elaborated upon the concept of 'careful wording as a part of self-censorship, however, journalists should not hide any relevant information:

When writing about delicate and sensitive issues, it is important to be careful and respect journalistic professionalism. In these situations, careful wording and reporting may be needed. Self-censorship should not be used to hide important facts or manipulate information, but to avoid excessive sensationalism and prevent the emergence of false news. (Mehmeti, 2023)

Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight) maintained her positioning on the usage of ethnic language, similar to Isufi and Mehmeti's statements, while also coming under attack for being 'pro-Serb' and a traitor to Albanians. She mentions how "if you give the platform to certain topics, that is the reality in transitional justice," regarding the unwarranted reaction from ethno-nationalists. Haxhiaj emphasizes how it is important to avoid using nationality whenever possible, promoting the use of open language that does not focus on ethnicity as it indirectly puts too much importance on ethnic issues. Furthermore, Veliu (Gazeta Express), Baftiu (RFE) and Kika (Koha) also agreed and confirmed upon how they have undergone self-censorship practices in their articles to avoid inflammation.

Regarding the Serbian perspective, Stojanovic believed that:

I don't feel the need for self censorship, to be honest, I am not reading the comments on social media. In Serbia it is a bit easier (to write freely) because Belgrade is bigger. The market is bigger. When I go out on the street, no one knows who I am. My security is not that much in question here like in Pristina. There is more protection for you when people don't know who you are. (Stojanovic, 2023)

#### **4.3.4 Educational**

Journalists attaching an educative style to their writing in the articles also employed itself as a notable theme in TJ frames and practices. Participants also agreed that when it comes to reporting on the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, there is more of a need to provide in-depth background and context to the readers in order to fully comprehend the complexity of such issues.

Xhorxhina Bami (Balkan Insight), when speaking about her explainer on the indictments of KLA leaders in the Hague for their war crimes, outlined the reasoning behind the need for going so far into detail regarding the charges and mechanisms.

It's a very huge indictment and there are so many claims on it, claims before it, so many things that people were expecting or that they don't agree with. So it was important to analyze and to explain what they are actually being charged with. The technicalities of day-to-day trials it's very difficult to understand what they are there for. The allegations happened so long ago (which are now not even part of the indictments) so it was hard to remember what they are there for. So it was important to explain why and how, and because they have so many different charges. (Bami, 2023)

Bami shared about how she educates herself as a journalist on these mechanisms in the international courts in order to prepare them for her reporting, going through endless documents published by the courts, indictments, judges' decisions and comprehending international law. As relevant in TJ, there is a need for journalists to be

educated upon transitional justice mechanisms in order to report on them, in which Bami speaks upon while covering her work more closely.

Baftiu (RFE) expresses the need for educational practices in journalism due to the lack of access or awareness of certain resources in Kosovo. Baftiu mentions in one article covering sexual violence how she “wanted people to know where they can go for help.” This is especially crucial for her since that many victims in Kosovo come from lesser-developed regions, leaving them with less ability to reach out for help. Writing in this style makes it important for vulnerable people to have easy access, knowing where they can report on sexual or domestic violence, according to Bafitu.

Isufi (Balkan Insight) however normalized what it means to have this ‘educational’ practice in TJ: “Every news outlet has some kind of background prepared in advance, which are used in stories to complement with historical background in order to make the audience familiar with the case.” Isufi’s colleague, Stojanovic maintained that the reasoning for these backgrounds is to avoid any speculation or misinterpretation, so the reader can fully understand what is going on, especially when they are not at the trial.

The use of the educational theme in TJ practice is also dependent on the level of locality regarding the media the journalist works for. As Çerkini (DW) points out, given that she works for international media, there is a need to explain to an international audience in better detail what is happening in the north of Kosovo regarding the protests and attacks on journalists. Journalists from local media also stressed about how there is a lesser need to explain since most Kosovo citizens understand the background context.

#### **4.3.5 Activist**

It is key here under this theme to highlight that activist does not speak towards the unprofessional practice of ‘activist journalism’ where activists consider themselves journalists. In the TJ context, the ‘activist’ practice plays a different role here. Participants, who are journalists only, express their willingness and emphasis on bringing certain topics to light and promote awareness, a trait that has been highlighted in TJ.

Vjosa Çerkini (DW) spoke about her motivation as a journalist while reconstructing an article on Kosovo's migration crisis. She felt that her role as a journalist is about fighting for the right of Kosovo to develop its sovereignty: "I don't want Kosovo to belong to Albania, or to Serbia. I want Kosovo to exist. And for that reason, I will raise my voice for everybody, for every story and everything, because of my country."

Çerkini further expanded on her active role as a journalist, detailing the compelling need to inform Kosovars about the risks of migrating abroad, asserting that people don't understand the reality of what it is like to migrate to Germany. As a journalist, Çerkini believes it is important to allow them to see the reality, given that many Kosovars travel abroad to seek better wages and opportunities. According to her, she doesn't "want people to be brainwashed" and wants people to be informed before they go abroad.

Baftiu (RFE) highlights the concept of spreading 'awareness' in her work, especially in covering sexual violence during the war. What inspired her to do the article was to help women "find peace within themselves and ask for help, then afterward ask for justice," stating further that this was her main mission in writing an article about one woman's experience. Similar to her responses analyzed in the 'Educational' theme, Baftiu plays an active role in encouraging readers to obtain more information on how to report any cases of violence, or for rape victims to find the courage to speak out on what happened to them 25 years ago during the 1998-99 Kosovo-Serbia war.

Jetlir Buja (Nacionale) believed that it's important to raise his voice to fight toxic nationalism in Kosovo:

One thing I have in my mind all the time is that they (the media) write about this nationalist, ethno-nationalist narrative that is really strong, that is pushed forward by almost all the parties in Kosovo. I was targeted yesterday, there were so many threats; you know it was a smear campaign against me because of something I said seven years ago. So this narrative is really strong. I believe I have to challenge it, and other people have to challenge it. (Buja, 2023)

Buja also agreed that in one of his articles, about Serbian integration in Kosovo was a form of ‘peace journalism,’ which has similarities to TJ, given that he wanted readers to understand that there are some Serb-majority parts of Kosovo where integration has been effective. Yet, Buja believes that activism should not play a strong role in journalism, especially when there is such a nationalistic agenda in the media. “The majority of journalists put their political beliefs before their reporting,” according to him.

Activist reporting under TJ framework also involves personal connections to certain subjects, such as for Serbeze Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight), who reported on a refugee story for International Refugee day, and found it difficult since she had undergone similar experiences during the Kosovo War. While she chose such a topic that was close to her and felt the need to raise voices for people still affected by the war, it was difficult for her “to avoid being involved emotionally. I’m 44 years old and for a long time I have been dealing with such issues. It has an impact on my mental health.” The story Haxhiaj covered was regarding Roma refugees still displaced in Montenegro after the war, where Haxhiaj had also been a refugee but was able to return to Kosovo. The ‘activist’ role in journalism can also clearly be caused by not only ethnic values and political beliefs, but also personal connections.

#### **4.3.6 Reconciliation**

Considered as one of the most important aspects of TJ, reconciliation involves actively de-escalating the tension between Albanians and Serbians in Kosovo, through narratives such as humanization, cooperation and balancing. The majority of the participants had agreed that their articles play some part in reconciliation, especially when reconstructing their pieces that shone a light on lesser-covered perspectives such as from the Kosovo Serbs. In one article, Bami (Balkan Insight) covered the attacks carried out by ethnic Serbs on Albanian-language journalists in the North during protests, where she found it relevant to mention that a Kosovo Serb cafe owner had provided shelter to the journalists, protecting them from the violent protesters. According to Bami, she “found it very important to the story to say yes, they were being

attacked, but at the same time, there was a Serb that helped them and is now being threatened (by other ethnic Serbs).”

However, another colleague at Balkan Insight, Stojanovic, expressed that she doesn't see her articles having that outcome (of reconciliation). When talking about one article regarding food shortages in northern Kosovo, she mentioned that she did not call her primary source “with the intention” of reconciliation, only to hear his stance. Stojanovic believes that her articles do not have such power to ‘reconcile’ ethnic tension.

Contrary to Stojanovic's perspective, Serbeze Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight) felt that she had a responsibility to make a contribution in transitional journalism and transitional justice when it involves reconciliation:

In Kosovo media, you can just find one sided narratives in local media. It's a narrative that only Serbs committed crimes. That means you cannot read or see reports that give space to both sides, the victims on both sides, the crimes on both sides, and especially with recognizing the victims from both sides. Being here (at Balkan Insight) we function a bit different because we give much more platform to the victims, and we expose the crimes on both sides, there is no censorship. (Stojanovic, 2023)

Haxhiaj also mentions how not addressing the crimes Kosovo Albanians committed during the war and painting themselves as the only victims is a “kind of self-censorship” because journalists refuse to acknowledge the rest of the truth for the sake of pursuing the ethno-nationalist narrative. Haxhiaj calls for better coverage of reconciliation happening “on the ground” and more attention from Albanian language media regarding issues plaguing Serbs. The Balkan Insight journalist believes that the media can “play an important role when it comes to calming the situation, since we are fed up with nationalistic narratives, hateful or divisive language from politicians and aggressive action from Serbia.” Haxhiaj lastly pointed out that she holds training with young journalists even to encourage stories about reconciliation, telling them not to be afraid if there is some inner crisis about shedding a light on the other side of the conflict.

Vjosa Çerkini also emphasized how important it is in her work to speak up for both sides of the conflict and avoid any one-sided narrative:

When I report, I raise the voice even for Kosovo Serbs, and I write about how the Kosovo Serbs are also victims, so from both sides, Kosovo and Serbia. People always have something to say against me. I think in both countries, it's not a question of what you are saying, but people sometimes are not ready to accept the reality if you are bringing facts that cover (crimes) from both sides. (Çerkini, 2023)

#### **4.3.7 Retributory Justice**

As mentioned before, formal accountability can sometimes turn into a more 'retributive' form of seeking accountability, such as the journalist may be actively calling for justice or punishment to the guilty party in conflict-related issues. While participants themselves addressed the theme, they did not exhibit any practice of it themselves, rather instead asserting that it is important to avoid this practice of 'retribution' in journalistic work that can be found in ethno-nationalist agendas. Journalists that participated in the study believed that it is important to filter and be careful about using certain quotes from politicians that may seem inflammatory to their reporting. Stojanovic, regarding a story she covered where Kosovo government began labeling Kosovo Serbs as 'criminals' and terrorists' mentions how

the usage of the word criminal is unjust, because these people were never tried for anything. They were never brought to the caught and were actually convicted of being a criminal. So the use of the language 'criminal' itself can be very inflammatory. (Stojanovic, 2023)

This issue is also related to formal accountability, as covered on page (blank). Therefore, it is clear that there is a dividing line between retributory justice and formal accountability as a practice, in such that journalists must be aware not to fall into retributory territory in their work. Baftiu (RFE) however points out it may be sometimes difficult for journalists to prevent their ethnic biases from being involved in their work, especially those that were old enough to be deeply affected by the war:

And I feel like, the journalists who are older than me might have more biases than me, because they were more involved in the war. I was born right before the war in 1997, so I didn't really remember anything, we just went to Macedonia (as refugees). Even when we're talking in our offices, you hear really sad stories about what happened to them or their family because of Serbian forces in Kosovo. (Baftiu, 2023)

She further admitted that she would have a different approach to the way she produces her stories had she been older and affected by the war. For her, it is a bit easier to be objective in her writing, however Baftiu believes “there is no such thing as 100% objectivity. We all have our biases.”

Bami (Balkan Insight) believes that it is the job of the journalist not to compare the severity of the war crimes against Kosovo Albanians with the crimes committed against Kosovo Serbs. The journalist is only supposed to show and explain what is happening, alluding that comparison is very subjective and can perhaps lead to a retributive nature.

Arlinda Mehmeti (Kallxo), who covers the war crimes trials in both Kosovo and the Hague, maintains that it is entirely crucial to be as informed and professional as possible to avoid any retribution when it comes to reporting war crimes:

While reporting on court events, it is essential to be objective and anticipate all sides. In an effort to report accurately and impartially, we must ensure that we are informed of all the details of the case and have consulted various sources. We must use clear and fair language, avoiding unconfirmed elements, speculation or emotions that could affect the objectivity of reporting. (Mehmeti, 2023)

#### **4.3.8 Historical Accounting**

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, historical accounting is a fundamental part of TJ due to the weakness of institutions and the inexistence of truth commissions. Journalists take it upon themselves to learn stories of what happened to victims during

the war and present ‘unofficial truths’ to the reader in order to play a leading role in documenting historical events related to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. Participants also agreed upon their role about this in regards to TJ, to give voices to the voiceless and hold those accountable by recording the stories via online media.

Baftiu (RFE) actively attend conferences about people who still have missing family members during the war, attempting to find people to interview so they could share their stories about how they remember their missing loved ones, in which she produced an article featuring a handful of interviewees. Each interviewee shared a story about their missing family member and how they remembered them, providing a platform for them to record their personal stories. Baftiu agreed that her role as a journalist does involve embracing the idea of recognizing that there are still stories to be told from the war, as is the responsibility of the media.

In Çerkini’s (DW) work, she mentions how in one of her articles she brought to light a story of a former KLA veteran who was shot at by his own comrades, almost 20 times when he was driving a car. Çerkini felt the responsibility to chronicle such stories that are not commonly found in the media since it goes against the ethno-nationalist narrative of Albanian-language media and also highlights Kosovo Albanians’ struggle to “accept” the reality that KLA veterans committed war crimes, even against their own people. However, according to Çerkini, she was the only journalist who interviewed and shared his story, which reveals the deniability of Kosovo Albanian media in sharing any narrative that might challenge their own ‘configured reality,’ that only Kosovo Albanians were war victims, not perpetrators.

Serbeze Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight) acknowledged that her work played a important role in shaping Kosovo’s history by bringing the people’s experiences to the front of the story’s narrative:

We have so many, many stories of Albanians suffering and trying to survive the retaliations of the Serbian army. But we have to bring stories about Kosovo Serbs during that time. And I just wanted to bring the people to the story, because families on both sides felt the burden of the war. In one case, the father of Darko, the time they sheltered Albanian refugees during the war, I also interviewed another Serbian who is now homeless about how he felt when he returned

home and see the home taken by Albanians when he was displaced from his home. I showed how the war affected the relationship between Albanians and Serbs in that village. (Haxhiaj, 2023)

Within historical accounting as a theme, there is a common writing style that was found in many of the articles that incorporated this practice. Baftiu (RFE) describes this as ‘descriptive storytelling,’ the way in which journalists in Kosovo provided detailed accounts of historical events in their articles.

#### **4.3.9 Promotion of Victims’ Rights**

Providing a voice for the victims to speak up regarding war crimes and maintaining that victims are aware of their rights in regard to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict is another key theme in TJ. Journalists feel responsible for accustoming to the role of assisting the victims on both sides, providing them a voice, and ensuring that their rights are not violated when it comes to legal procedures. The interviews reconstructed and sampled various stories that pertained to journalists interacting and covering the victims’ side, similar to historical accounting but in a more active role.

Bami (Balkan Insight) attests to how important it is to show the victims’ side when it comes to war crimes trials, regardless of the support from Kosovo Albanians for the accused, since they are considered ‘war heroes’ rather than perpetrators. Bami demonstrated that

we have so many people that support them (KLA) and are against the court, but at the same time, you have a handful of people that are claiming that they have been harmed. So it’s important to show that side as well, you cannot deny it. (Bami, 2023)

However, Bami’s colleague Stojanovic (Balkan Insight) does not see the articles having much of an effect on the process of victims, when discussing one of her articles that covered the unfairness of the representation for the victims in the Hague trials. Stojanovic “would like to believe that this gives a voice for the victims,” but moreso believes that the main responsibility of the article is to simply highlight that there is an

issue or disservice being done to the victims. For example, she pointed out how in her article, it is unjust that one lawyer that is responsible for representing hundreds of victims cannot even speak their language, pinpointing the disadvantage of needing a translator. Articles such as these pertain to the theme regarding promoting victims' rights.

Kallxo's Arlinda Mehmeti expressed the need to respect the privacy of the witnesses at the war crimes trials, however, saying that journalists need to understand and follow certain standards of covering such transitional justice mechanisms so that no harm is done:

The media must respect privacy and must not violate it without a very strong reason. Compliance with these ethical, regulatory and legal obligations requires a clear balance between privacy and the right to serve information in the public interest. The statements of the witnesses as noted in the above article are published in their entirety as witness quotes without creating bias. (Mehmeti, 2023)

According to Mehmeti, there is a standard to follow in which journalists do not "create bias" when it comes to reporting on the testimonies of the witnesses, or the victims themselves. Haxhiaj (Balkan Insight) admitted that in her work, she tries to give much more platform to the victims, quoting that

when it comes to institutional steps you can see how very little has been done when it comes to dealing with the past, or giving a platform to victims or giving reparation to victims, or just serving justice for that. Really, I think it will be a long way. (Haxhiaj, 2023)

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter elaborates further upon the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis and results. Considerations regarding the relation of the findings to the development of TJ as a theory and a conceptualized practice in journalism studies is vital for the solidification of the dissertation. Firstly quantitative results are deliberated, followed by qualitative, and then both are collectively reviewed to fully outline the efficiency of the mixed-method approach in which the most optimal results were secured. Nonetheless, the discussion will also include consideration of the limitations involved in formulating the dissertation and empirical research.

### ***5.1 Discussion of Quantitative Results***

Sweeney et al. (2020) conceptualizes formal accountability as the most dominant form of reporting on conflict-related crimes; thus, for that reason, it is not unexpected to find formal accountability as the most dominant frame in the framing analysis results. The frame was dominant not only as the primary frame but also in the case of being the supplementary or secondary frame, which therefore demonstrates further how formal accountability plays a strong role in TJ regarding conflict-related issues. Furthermore, in the differentiation between transitional justice coverage and non-transitional justice coverage, formal accountability is also the most frequent frame. The findings of the quantitative thus confirm that ‘seeking accountability’ is an identifiable trait in TJ, both in transitional justice coverage and non-transitional justice coverage.

When attributing that TJ is more activist and educational, (Andresen et al. 2017) the results also confirm these practices within TJ, though not as apparent as formal accountability, however still visible within the frequency of the frames coded. For this reason, it can be concluded that the idea of an ‘extended’ or ‘double’ role for journalists is verified, even when further considering the combined frequency of other frames that highlight how journalists, via their work, are identifiably taking on more roles than that of a ‘Western journalist’ or ‘observer’ should. The frequency of the historical accounting frame solidifies further how journalists in Kosovo play another role in

history in itself, attempting to ensure that stories from the war and other aspects of the conflict are recorded via online media. The following frames also confirm the notion of such an extended role in TJ: promotion of victims' rights, and retributive justice reconciliation. Though their visibility is limited in comparison with formal accountability, educational, historical accountability, and activist frames, it is still essential to acknowledge their existence within a small sample of 59 articles that can furthermore strengthen the notion of different roles that Kosovo journalists must embark upon when covering conflict. However, a deterrent to this extended or double role is the self-censorship frame. Though it has been attested that self-censorship is not easily identifiable in comparison to the other frames, its appearance amongst the sampled articles can also demonstrate that journalists in Kosovo face obstacles when it comes to pursuing their TJ roles. Given that TJ acknowledges self-censorship as a practice in Kosovo, this is better explained through the qualitative results.

The addition of supplementary frames also confirms that there are, in certain cases, a possibility of one or more identifiable practice being channeled into journalistic products. This explains that there may be more than one aim in certain articles when it involves reporting on the conflict. However, supplementary frames do not appear as often as dominant frames, which can be determined by how in other cases, only one practice of TJ is identifiable in articles. Lastly, the comparison of transitional justice and non-transitional justice frames acknowledge that while Sweeney et al. (2020) try to connect transitional justice coverage with TJ, it is also possible to uncover TJ practices outside of transitional justice coverage. TJ could be referenced to the media coverage of a country in transition (post-conflict, post-communist) rather than solely attached to the media's role in transitional justice.

## ***5.2 Discussion of Qualitative Results***

Interviews with journalists provided a core understanding of how TJ is practiced, while the results from the quantitative method served as supplementary findings to better understand and guide the nature of practices described in reconstruction interviews. Formal accountability, or seeking accountability, as a practice, is easily identified as a dominating theme in the results. Participants

continually made mention of the necessity to simply present evidence, stick to facts, and avoid any speculation, which evidently portrays that while TJ may be a newly found research agenda, there are still traits such as formal accountability that can confirm that journalists in Kosovo adhere to professional ‘prescribed’ Western standards of journalism. There is an excessive need to maintain caution in reporting, solely embracing the facts as the unitary form of reporting, which can also suggest that the caution can also be perceived as a form of self-censorship. Kosovo journalists tend to monitor carefully the words they use, the quotes they select, and ensure that all the facts are indeed correct, in order to prevent not only lack of journalistic quality, but also any possibility of inflammatory reporting. These findings work very well in supporting the theoretical framework on TJ.

The danger of patriotic journalism as also pinpointed in the literature review and theoretical framework, is also another trait that many participants highlighted that it must be avoidable at any cost. TJ theory acknowledges that Kosovo media is less patriotic than other Western Balkan countries (Sweeney et al., 2020), which is also confirmed by the results of the interviews. Journalists were vocal about the need to remove their ethnic allegiance from being identifiable in their work, as it can lead to depreciation in journalistic quality and continue to reinforce the ethno-nationalist narrative in Kosovo. Participants also mentioned how editorial pressure plays a role in their reporting, which can also be attributed to self-censorship as well, given that editors dictate the addition or omitting of certain information, quotes, and sources from articles. This also confirms that, as demonstrated in the theoretical framework, editorial pressure is another identifiable practice in TJ.

As uncovered in the methodology and the preceding section, self-censorship is not as easily uncovered in the quantitative analysis, therefore rendering it crucial for the interviews to focus somewhat on the notions of self-censorship that is involved in TJ practices. Self-censorship generally played a role in not only the practice itself, but in all other TJ practices as well when considered in the interviews. When historical accounting or promotion of victims’ rights was involved in the reconstructed product, journalists had to mention how they had to be very careful when writing about such sensitive topics. Furthermore, when speaking about retributory justice as a practice, participants acknowledged that this is another practice that must be avoided at all costs,

thus further attributing to this ‘caution’ that journalists would employ when selecting their sources, information and quotes in the articles.

Reconciliation as a practice is also linked with self-censorship. While journalists were articulate in their efforts to de-escalate ethnic tensions by reporting from both sides, there were repeated mentions of how they would come under attack for such reconciliatory practices. Being seen as a ‘traitor’ by their ethnic group was also mentioned, which strengthens the relevance of the TJ theoretical framework. According to Sweeney et al. (2020, p. 496): “Nearly all of the interviewees agreed that they would, or indeed have, on their own initiative, re-framed stories that might inflame ethnic tensions.” While participants did mention how they were brave enough to overcome this fear of being seen as a traitor or inflaming ethnic tensions, it can still be confirmed that self-censorship has an effect on the ability to publish journalism that features reconciliation practices.

Journalists also demonstrated a wide understanding of victims’ rights and transitional justice mechanisms, which is contrary to what Sweeney et al. (2020, p. 501) concluded in their discussion: “As with the lack of knowledge about some criminal justice issues, several interviewees were doubtful of their or their colleagues’ understanding of truth commissions.” However, participants also stressed the need to educate more journalists on reporting professionally and accumulating a better understanding of transitional justice mechanisms (such as truth commissions). When speaking upon victims’ rights, journalists were very adamant on how it was necessary to give a platform for the victims through their work. In Sweeney et al. (2020, p. 496), a participant “conceded that non-Albanian victims of the conflict, ‘are excluded from reportage.” However, reconstructing various articles pertaining to historical accounting and victims’ rights, journalists shared that they were not afraid to include victims from both sides. Thus, this can be considered to be not as prevalent in Kosovo media, such as that there is a lack of balancing both sides.

The findings also confirm how visible the ‘activist’ and ‘educator’ role is in TJ. Journalists clearly felt a responsibility in their work to spread awareness of certain issues pertaining to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict, such as in fighting against the ethno-nationalist narrative in Kosovo pushed by local media and the government. Awareness also pertains to garnering attention upon where victims can seek out help for

their trauma, or where they can report any crime that occurs. Journalists notably perceived themselves as liable in contributing to the attention of certain issues, in doing as much effort that is notoriously extended in comparison to Western media. In terms of the educator role, journalists also distinctly outlined their motivations in consistently providing background information in most of their articles. This was especially found exceedingly notable among journalists at the regional and international level, as there is more of a need to 'explain' to audiences that are not from Kosovo.

### ***5.3 Discussion of Mixed-Method Results***

It remains imperative to demonstrate how both results complement each other which can further justify the findings. While the quantitative findings outline the picture of TJ, the qualitative results fill in the entire picture, in order to gain a meaningful understanding of how this practice is researchable and identifiable. In one example, the quantitative results do not confirm entirely that self-censorship is exhibited as a practice in TJ. However, the qualitative findings do, in fact, verify and solidify the presence of self-censorship as a key practice within TJ. The overwhelming presence of the 'self-censorship' practice in the interviews demonstrated what the quantitative results could not do on its own.

While formal accountability is easily noted as the most dominant frame, as a practice, it was better understood and elaborated upon in order to develop as to why it is the most prominent out of all practices and frames. The results of the interviews determined and confirmed that formal accountability is, and continues to be a fundamental and crucial part of TJ. Motivations behind the appearance of the activist and educational frame were also emphasized and manifested through the interviews, allowing the researcher to understand why these two frames are employed as a practice in TJ. Journalists were open in sharing their rationale and inspirations behind creating each piece, thus demonstrating further why the reconstruction method is entirely useful as a technique for identifying journalistic processes.

While retributive justice did in fact appear as a dominant and supplementary frame in the articles, all ten interviewees were adamant against the practice of retributive justice. This, in fact reveals that retributive justice is not as visible as a

practice in Kosovo compared to the years between the end of the war and the declaration of independence (1999-2008). Lastly, when referring to historical accounting and victims' rights as a frame, it was determined that while journalists want to take part in 'recording history' as TJ theoretical framework dictates, the interviews tell another story. Participants attached more the idea of promoting victims' rights with the activist' role in such as they want to give more of a platform to victims rather than just simply writing in history.

Collectively, the entirety of results foresee a changing environment in Kosovo's mediascape, especially given the rise in tensions in the North during the time of interviews and coding. Compared to the results from the 2020 (Sweeney et al.) and 2017 (Andresen et al.) studies, the results in the dissertation not only make an effort to confirm the prescriptions made for TJ, but also set forth newly found ideas involved.

#### ***5.4 Limitations***

Embarking upon a mixed-method approach can also signify that there is more room for limitations within the study itself. Addressing the small sample used to code for frames (59 articles) can pinpoint the lack of strength in the results of determining or highlighting the frequency of any given frame. For example, Matthes (2008) used a total of 904 items (articles) in order to identify frames. Van Gorp (2005) and Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) both used over a thousand items in their framing analyses as well. Clearly, the stronger the sample is, the more likely it is possible that a frame is identifiable or confirmed. As also highlighted by Druckman (2001), there is susceptibility to confirmation bias within the framing. If the researcher is looking for a frame, they will convince themselves into thinking it is there or whether it exists. Frames can also be considered a figment of the imagination, meaning that it is entirely possible to invent frames that do not exist. Conclusively in this regard, had a larger sample been chosen, with more coders involved in the process of framing analysis, there would have been further solidification of the existence of TJ frames.

There are also limitations within the approach to the reconstruction method. The recommendation for the number of items sampled with each journalist is 8-11, according to Reich and Barnoy (2016). However, in this study, only a range of 5-8 items

were recorded, which can serve as a weakness in regards to confirming the existence of TJ practices in the processes and the product itself. Additionally, the researches recommended a one month period for sampling, however, items in this study were sampled from February 2023 to the end of June. For that reason, certain articles that were not as recent, were more difficult for journalists in the study to recall how they created the article. Lastly, in regards to reconstruction, the issue of the interview length can also play a factor in the quality of the content extracted from the interviews. The participants were interviewed for more than the recommended time (60-75 minutes), instead spilling into an average of 90 minutes for each interview. This can lead to a lack of effort in responses from journalists towards the end of the interview, where we reached the last article that needs to be constructed. Fatigue can lead to inability to recall certain parts of the process, thus rendering itself as a limitation to the results of the study.

In regards to transcribing the interviews, there were also certain limitations. Firstly, the researcher is hard of hearing but is equipped with a cochlear implant in one ear. Therefore, there were some quotes that were not used in the findings due to the inability to hear. This was also a direct result of the settings for the interviews, as most cafes in Pristina blast loud music, causing it to be difficult to transcribe interviews which led to quotes being omitted due to unidentifiable. In terms of ethnic background, no Kosovo-Serb journalist was found for the study, however a Serbian journalist covering Kosovo (Stojanovic) provided a different perspective for the study. Therefore, the views are almost entirely representative of the Kosovo Albanian population, and not the Kosovo Serbs. Therefore, it cannot be said that the views or conclusions of the dissertation represent the views of Kosovo Serb journalists.

Lastly, given that almost half of the articles coded were from Albanian-language media portals (Kallxo, Nacionale, Koha, RFE), this can lead to limitations in the quality of the translating done by the researcher. While the researcher is near-proficient in Albanian, there are several limitations involved since the researcher is not a native speaker. This can also lead to misunderstandings in the articles themselves.

### ***5.5 Recommendations for Further Research***

Only two papers exist that actively research and explain the practice of TJ. While this can also be considered a limitation, it also serves to sustain that there is unlimited potential for the future of the newfound research agenda. This research is the first of its kind to conduct a framing analysis and incorporate transitional journalism under framing theory. However given the small sample, there is a possibility to conduct further studies that solely focus on quantitative methodologies, which further confirms the existence of relevant TJ frames in not only Kosovo media, but in other Western Balkan countries.

Given that this study only focuses on Kosovo, it might be imperative to uncover TJ practices in other countries such as Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia. Understanding how TJ is practiced in these countries can lead to the strengthening of TJ as a practice, and a developed comprehension regarding how it might differ or be similar in each Western Balkan country. Re-using framing analysis and reconstruction methods in other Western Balkan countries can be useful in identifying TJ practices and frames.

While the study only employs 10 journalists, it is perhaps necessary for further TJ research to consult with more journalists for the study in order to gain a better overview of such TJ practices in Kosovo and other Western Balkan countries. Lastly, a study focusing only on the perspectives of Kosovo Serb journalists in regard to TJ may also enhance the understanding of TJ as a practice in Kosovo.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and results of the study, it is conclusive to state that TJ, both in the sense of framing theory and as a practice, exists in Kosovo's mediascape. By completing a mixed-methodology research by employing two justified approaches, the prevalence of TJ is confirmed as a journalistic practice in Kosovo. To what extent it is used as a practice remains to be seen. However, it is foremost relevant to acknowledge that Western Balkan journalistic practices can be categorized under a research agenda that differs from what is deemed as 'professional' or 'objective' by Western standards. Journalists in post-communist and post-conflict environments such as Kosovo clearly face different obstacles than that of the West, which therefore called for the need to research their practices empirically.

As confirmed by the study, journalists in Kosovo do take upon an extended and double role due to the failure of their institutions and transitional justice mechanisms. However, as per Sweeney et al. (2020, p. 502): "there are those who either resist the idea of playing an extended role or disagree upon what such a role would entail." This is also presented in the findings, as Kosovo journalists continue to be unable to fully agree on what TJ might entail as a practice. There is also a need to understand not only the identification of TJ as a practice, but its impact on the transitional justice mechanisms or the transition of the state itself. Given that TJ is empirically justified as a practice, this remains to be the next step for moving TJ "from being an analytical framework to a normative proposition akin to peace journalism" (Sweeney et al., 2020).

Ultimately, when post-conflict and post-communist environments such as Kosovo are in the process of transitioning from a phase of war to a phase of peace, it is clear to see how journalists view their role in this transition. By contributing to their country's development through various practices such as the promotion of victims' rights or de-escalation of ethnic tensions, it is crucial to recognize that journalists in Kosovo are doing more than being just 'observant' journalists reporting on what they see. Conclusively, understanding how these roles and styles of reporting actually affect the development itself remains to be seen.

## 7 References

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## 8 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent form

#### Consent form

##### Who am I?

My name is Jakob Weizman, I am a 25-year-old graduate student in Erasmus Mundus Masters in Journalism, Media and Globalization. I have worked extensively as a journalist in Kosovo for different media outlets, while also doing my bachelor's there. I am currently writing my masters' thesis on journalistic practices in Kosovo.

##### What is the topic of my master thesis?

My thesis focuses on transitional journalism as a practice in Kosovo. Transitional journalism involves different roles for journalists than that of a traditional, Western journalist. Journalists in Kosovo tend to see their role as more extensive or a 'double' role in contributing to the development of Kosovo, and transitioning from a conflict environment to a peace environment.

##### What is the purpose of my thesis?

My thesis aims to empirically identify whether transitional journalism practices are evident in Kosovo media during the recent ongoing tension in northern Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo government. By analyzing your articles and conducting an interview where we go through how you created your articles, this will help me better understand how transitional journalism works in Kosovo.

##### What is your role?

I would like to ask you to send me 5-8 samples of your work in the past 3-4 months that relate to the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. After I am done analyzing your articles, we will sit down for an interview regarding how you formulated the articles and the motivation behind each one. The interview will last no longer than 90 minutes.

#### Consent and privacy

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby consent, that I have read the information above and allow Jakob Weizman to use my quotes for the purpose of his master thesis.

Name

Signature

Date

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