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Margit V. Wunsch Gaarmann. *The War in Our Backyard: The Bosnia and Kosovo Wars through the Lens of the German Print Media*. Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2015. 296 pp. ISBN 978-3-95808-011-9.

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The wars in Bosnia (1992–1995) and Kosovo (1998–1999) caused Germany to seriously consider military intervention abroad for the first time since the Second World War. The political stance taken by the then-recently reunited Germany towards the so-called Balkan wars was largely negotiated by the national public press. In *The War in Our Backyard* Margit V. Wunsch Gaarmann analyses how these two wars—and the political debates they triggered—were portrayed by the German press. Her study can be seen as a part of a larger field of research dealing with the connection between media and war (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010; Nöring, Schneider, and Spilker 2009; Paul 2004; Voigt 2005). In her book Gaarmann presents a differentiated image of the German media, demonstrating that reports were far more controversial than suggested by the academic literature to date (Collon 2007; Knightley 2002; Kreml 2004; Reljić 2002). The author reveals numerous divergent points of view and diverse interpretations in the media and even finds contradictory opinions within a single editorial office. Nevertheless, while tracing the “grand (editorial) lines” of media opinion, Gaarmann shows that in many cases the direction of impact was similar, with differences only emerging gradually.

Gaarmann’s research is based on the evaluation of nine German print media titles, ranging widely across the political spectrum from far right to far left, enabling her to identify a variety of perspectives. After analyzing a large number of articles published between 1992 and 1999, Gaarmann concludes that the collective memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust created a polarizing lens through which German media and society view war and conflict. She goes on to question how far German perceptions towards and coverage of the two conflicts in former Yugoslavia were colored by the ongoing process of national reconciliation with Germany’s own history.

The study is divided into two main sections, the first dealing with the Bosnian war and the second with the conflict in Kosovo. Gaarmann’s emphasis on the inextricable connection between the wars is mirrored in the book’s structure. Each section contains a chapter on three key periods: the first on the initial phase of the conflict, the second on a crucial atrocity that marked a turning point, and the final chapter on the international interventions that ended the immediate violence.

In the first chapter on the Bosnian conflict, Gaarmann shows the diversity of discourses reflected by German print media. She argues that most publications used the Second World War as an important explanation for the outbreak of violence in the

Balkans but that differing emphasis was placed on the roles of perpetrators and victims. The following chapter examines the massacre in Srebrenica in July 1995. At the time the atrocities in the hitherto "safe area" unfolded, the media had no access to the UN enclave, according to Gaarmann's research. Media reports remained imprecise, and journalists made ambiguous statements due to a lack of information.

Srebrenica marked a pivotal change of course for Germany itself. There was lively debate in the press about a military participation in a possible NATO campaign against Serbia, in the course of which explicit references to the Second World War and the Holocaust played an important role in the ways German politicians argued both for and against involvement.

Analyzing the Dayton Agreement, which ended the war in 1995, Gaarmann refers to a "media blackout." Negotiations were held on a restricted American army base and the international media was rigorously censored. Surprisingly, the press rarely picked up on this lack of information.

The second part of the book deals with the conflict in Kosovo and begins with a chapter on the outbreak of war in 1998. Press interpretations explaining the violence remained narrow. Initially, for example, the formation and guerrilla tactics of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were hardly mentioned (though this would change later in 1998), as was the exclusion of Kosovo from the Dayton negotiations. There was detailed press coverage of the violence itself, with a focus on the suffering of the Kosovo-Albanian civilians. In analyzing the incidents in Račak, where 45 Kosovo-Albanians were killed in January 1999, Gaarmann shows in detail how problematic it was for the media to deal with uncorroborated information and how frequently they oversimplified complex issues. Nevertheless, the incidents in Račak formed an important milestone that led to the NATO air strikes against Serbian forces in 1999. In Germany this intervention was the subject of intense controversy, although it was widely accepted as a "humanitarian intervention." Unanimous support, however, began to break down after just a few weeks, and, as Gaarmann demonstrates, the media started to take up differing positions soon after. In this context, the author shows that the German press did not merely reproduce information received from NATO but rather took up positions criticizing both NATO and Serbian forces.

In her investigation of the coverage as a whole, Gaarmann also incorporates quantitative analysis of published visual material such as cartoons and photographs. She shows that during the Bosnian war a majority of the pictures depicted Croat and Muslim casualties, "which left the reader with an overwhelming perception of Serbian culpability" (70). Her analysis of the photographs documenting the war in Kosovo produced similar results. With only a few exceptions, there were almost no images of Serbian casualties.

Gaarmann goes on to note that the photographs a newspaper chose to publish at a specific time did not necessarily record a contemporary event. Unfortunately, she fails to provide an explanation as to why or to analyze the use of press photography more deeply. However, she does raise important questions that should be the subject of other studies.

Gaermann's juxtaposition of the two conflicts demonstrates a close link between the coverage of both—in other words, press coverage of the Bosnian war prepared the ground for Germany's contribution to the NATO intervention in Kosovo. The incidents in Srebrenica and their commemoration fundamentally influenced the analysis and interpretation of the Kosovo conflict, and Srebrenica remained an important reference in legitimizing NATO's intervention in 1999.

Comparing the coverage of both wars also reveals interesting strategic changes in the presentation of arguments. While during the Bosnian war Germany's past was used by the German media as a justification against involvement in the Balkans, the Second World War was rarely mentioned by the end of the 1990s. Even treatment of the religious aspect changed noticeably. During the Kosovo conflict, religious differences were no longer used to explain the outbreak of violence, and the media no longer referred to the "Balkan's ancient hatreds." The war in Kosovo was predominantly interpreted as a war of nationalist aggression and a result of Serbian nationalist policy.

This relates to another important development: the changing depiction of Slobodan Milošević, a central theme of the book. Investigating the portrayal of the Serbian president throughout both wars, the author shows that initially this important actor was hardly even mentioned in newspapers. From today's perspective this is a surprising realization, in stark contrast to the secondary literature, in which Milošević is conventionally accepted to be "the main culprit" (68) after 1995. Gaermann uses Srebrenica to demonstrate this. Most articles in 1995 link Milošević directly to the massacre, with the subsequent conflict in Kosovo destroying what was left of his reputation. The media as a whole identified his nationalist policies as the driving force behind the ongoing violence. From 1998 onward Milošević was ascribed personal responsibility for the war and thus portrayed as an autocratic, backward politician, in opposition to the "civilized West" (218).

Although Gaermann's investigation is extremely detailed, there is a clear lack of methodological consistency. While, in a broad sense, the concept of collective memory serves as the theoretical basis in her analysis of the articles, Gaermann does not dedicate a separate chapter explicitly setting out her methodological approach. Her examination of the visual material relies on a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. She includes numerous tables detailing the number of pictures published to present different aspects of the war, providing several examples of images for the reader's benefit. However, this appears insufficient to deal with the richness of the content, in particular with regard to photographs.

This is, nevertheless, an important study. In addition to her analysis of the articles, Gaermann tells the story of the Bosnian and the Kosovo wars while linking these directly to German domestic affairs and foreign policy. She not only examines the controversies debated in the media but also gives insights into the debates held in the German Bundestag during the 1990s. In doing so, Gaermann manages at the same time to write a piece of German history.

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