



REPORTING INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS IN ALBANIAN MEDIA

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The desire and the need to learn about what happens beyond our “fence” or border has been one of the most important premises for the emergence and development of the journalism and the news industry. For decades and centuries, the press, television and radio “have brought the world to our living room” (Mikich, 2001)¹ by somehow quenching the thirst and natural curiosity for what is new somewhere away from us any given day. With the development of the media and communication technology, the geography of news too has expanded increasingly and the process of informing people has become ever faster.

However, the media crisis of the last two decades, maybe for the first time since the emergence of the press, has outlined a shrinking and narrowing process of space for news in newspapers, radio and television. There is no shortage of researchers across the world who talk about and bring evidence about a shrinkage of the geography of international news and a decline in the number of stories from the world in all leading media. This phenomenon was noticed before also by the American Journalism Review (AJR) center, which concluded in a 2011 research study that in 25 years, from 1985 until 2010, the number of world news in the main American newspapers had fallen by 53 percent or in other words by half.²

1. Sonia Mikich, cited in: Russ-Mohl, Stephan, *Journalism*, K&B Publishing House, Tirana, 2010, p. 203

2. *Shrinking Foreign Coverage*, American Journalism Review, 2011, Link: <http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=4998>

This tendency has been noticed also in Albania and the Albanian media. However, to date, there has been no research to explore, analyze and reach conclusions about the dimensions, typology and outcomes of this phenomenon in the Albanian media environment. Filling this void has been one of the main spurs for undertaking this research study, which views international information and reporting as vital and indispensable for the Albanian audience and society.

1. Object and methodology of the research study

In some textbooks but also in the perception of a large part of audiences, based on localization, news fall into two major groups: “Domestic stories” and “Foreign stories.” However, according to Furio Colombo, this division reflects the “arbitrary character of the separation between the foreign and the domestic” (Colombo, 2010:12). Other authors also join the idea that only localization is not sufficient and does not produce an accurate classification of news. There are many stories that could take place inside a country, but that have a transnational or international nature. Thus, for instance, the story about the meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Tirana at the end of May this year could hardly be classified simply as a “domestic story.” On the other hand, there is also a dilemma regarding events that take place outside the country but that involves local characters or actors, as was the case with the concert of the renowned Albanian opera artist Inva Mula in Belgrade, Serbia. What category would the story about this event fall under? Is it a “domestic story” or a “foreign story?”

In order to avoid to the extent possible the semantic confusion as well as to provide a more accurate “meter” for the identification and measurement of research units, this research study chose to use the term “international news” instead of the term “foreign news” and to call the

process as “international reporting.”

Based on a classification of international news provided by authors Philip Elliott and Peter Golding, the study divides international news into three categories:

1. Foreign news at home
2. Home news abroad
3. Foreign news abroad, (Elliott & Golding, 1974)

This categorization is clearer, more detailed and helps us, in the broader context of international news, to see what the rapport is between international news that are not related to Albania or Albanian actors and those that, in some way, are related to the country and its direct actors or interests, i.e. contain a domestic element.

Nevertheless, the study does not neglect the criteria of localization. In the process of empirical research, as well as during the coding of research units, we also made a division of stories by the place they occur in, in order to enable some sort of geographical mapping of international news published in Albanian media outlets. Naturally, the mapping process based on localization also had its own challenges. There are developments or events that you cannot localize in a given country. For instance, some reports relate to the “Panama Papers” scandal that had to do with numerous countries at the same time. There were also other news stories that dealt with international drug trafficking that often are not related to or localized in a single country. For that reason, during the geographical mapping, we added the category of “transnational news” to the division of news stories by country, an approach borrowed from Furio Colombo.

As was made clear above, the object of this research study involves international news published in Albanian media. The researched sample includes the press, television and online media.

We chose four daily newspapers to research for the study, namely dailies “Panorama,” “Gazeta Shqiptare,” “Shqiptarja.com” and “Mapo,” which we monitored for a three-month period from March 1, 2016 to May 31, 2016. In selecting these dailies, we took into consideration that the sample should include the best-selling daily in the country (Panorama) as well as three other national daily newspapers with a special profile, distinguishable from one another as well as in terms of the research purpose.

Among the television stations, the sample includes the two national channels with the highest viewership in the country, namely Top Channel TV and Klan TV. We monitored 10 of the 7:30 p.m. news programs of these two stations on random days, during the period March 1, 2016 until May 31, 2016. The following table includes the dates of the monitored news programs:

Table 1: Dates of monitored newscasts

No.	Top-Channel TV	Klan TV
1	March 7, 2016	March 5, 2016
2	March 16, 2016	March 13, 2016
3	March 22, 2016	March 22, 2016
4	March 30, 2016	April 12, 2016
5	April 8, 2016	April 18, 2016
6	April 15, 2016	April 24, 2016
7	April 27, 2016	May 6, 2016
8	May 3, 2016	May 10, 2016
9	May 14, 2016	May 19, 2016
10	May 25, 2016	May 30, 2016

Of the online media outlets, we chose albeu.com. We selected this portal as one of the most visited news portals that also fits the category “digital native,” meaning that they originally emerged on the web.

For all the selected media outlets, the final monitored unit was the published or broadcasted stories. They were coded and classified into variables such as: length of story (for newspapers and online media outlets) and time length (for television outlets), the place it occurred in, presence on front page, sources used, story authorship, topic or event reported, etc.

The main focus of the monitoring was on the international news of the day. However, the monitoring also included sports news from around the world. The latter were identified more in terms of quantity in order to look at what their rate is vis-à-vis international news of the day in Albanian media. The monitored sample does not include “soft news” or celeb news from the world. In the case of newspapers, the monitoring also included articles belonging to commentaries, such as editorials, columns and opinion pieces, in order to verify the degree of their presence in Albanian press.

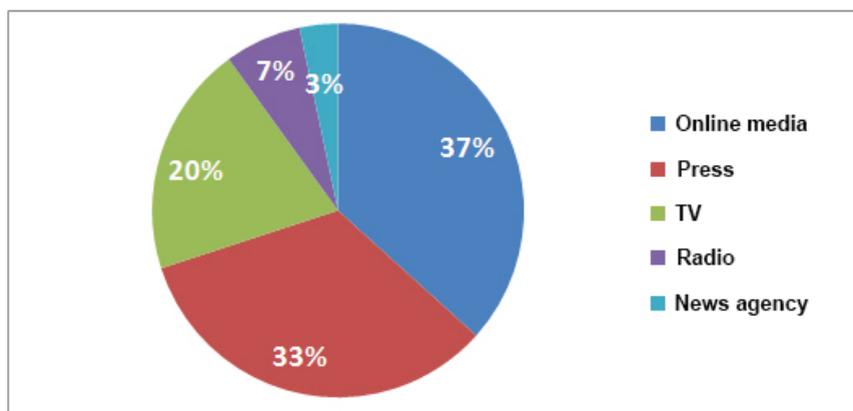
Besides quantitative data, we also collected qualitative data that have to do mainly with the main axes of international reporting, some elements of reporting standards, such as for instance, the presence of sources used, etc.

Furthermore, because of the needs of the research study, we conducted a survey of 30 international reporting journalists who work in different media outlets. They were asked about different issues that have to do with the condition and situation of international reporting in Albania. Below is a table and graphic of the division of those surveyed by media category.

Table no. 2: Division of respondents by category of media

No.	Category of media	Number
1	Online media	11
2	Press	10
3	TV	6
4	Radio	2
5	News agency	1

Graphic no.1: Division of respondents by category of media



As may be seen, we made sure to include representatives from all media categories in the survey sample. Online media as well as newspapers, representing the largest number of media outlets, also have the highest number of respondents.

2. The situation of international news reporting in Albania

After the fall of communism and the establishment of the pluralistic democracy system in the beginning of the 1990s, the country experienced a flourishing of private, pluralistic and independent media too. The overall number of newspapers and magazines founded in the last two decades is more than two hundred, including local print media outlets (Godole, 2014: 72). The number of daily national newspapers reaches about 20, a number that is the highest in the region against the population number.³

With regard to audiovisual media, at present, there are 2 private national television stations and the public national television with its three district branches, 2 satellite televisions, 3 commercial digital platforms, 66 local television stations and 83 cable television stations. There are also two national radio stations, 1 public national radio station with its district branches as well as 71 local radio stations.⁴

This rich and diverse media ecosystem has also expanded the possibilities and the space for international reporting. However, this space of information, especially in the print media, remains little vis-à-vis the rest of the information. Besides, Albanian media outlets, being relatively small ones, do not have a separate department for international news and, in most cases, is covered by the news sectors or departments. This is also conditioned by the scarce human resources available to every media outlet and the scarce budget that they put aside for this area of information.

3. Balkan Media Barometer – Albania, AMI, Tirana, 2013, p. 24

4. Source: Audio-visual Media Authority (AMA)

Nevertheless, in spite of the absence of a separate editorial structure, most Albanian media outlets include a separate section on international news, often labeled “news from the world,” which may be daily or less frequently than other news rubrics. Of the 30 media outlets included in the survey conducted in the context of this research study, it results that 27 of them have a section, rubric or page for international news and only 3 of them do not have one such. With regard to frequency, the rubric is regular in 25 of these outlets and in 5 of them it is created or opened on a case by case basis.

At present, the most important channels for international information in the country’s media are the daily newspapers, main television stations and online news portals. Also, a channel that has been followed by a relatively small part of the Albanian audience included foreign radios in Albanian, such as the Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, or news agencies such as AFP, Reuters, BBC, etc. However, the crisis and budget cuts led to less human resources in these agencies, leading even to the complete interruption of services in the Albanian language, as was the case of the BBC Albanian Service. The Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA) also played some role for informing the public on news from the world, but this role has been minimized a lot and this public news entity is coming out of the information stage both because of the lack of vision of public decision-making and because of the poor updating strategy.

Of great importance for the authenticity and quality of reporting on world events is also the presence of correspondents of media outlets in different countries to bring original information that is directly verified on site. Based on the research in the context of this study, it results that of the monitored Albanian daily newspapers, none has a correspondent in other countries of the world. Meanwhile,

of the television stations, it results that Top Channel TV has its own correspondents in Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Italy, Britain and Belgium. Klan TV and ABC News have a correspondent in Brussels while Ora News TV has a correspondent in Italy. Of the online media outlets, Albeu.com has its correspondents in Kosovo and Macedonia, while Balkan Insight (which is in the English language), because of the nature of the portal, has its correspondents in all countries of the Balkan region. As may be seen, the number of correspondents outside the country is very limited. This makes most media outlets to refer to or translate from international media, often without citing the source, as will be seen further in the detailed analysis of international reporting in the monitored media outlets.

The main reason for the very low number of correspondents of Albanian media outlets out of the country is the one mentioned by researcher Stephan Russ-Mohl when he talks about the cuts in correspondent jobs in world media too: the huge expenses required for a correspondent outside the country (Russ-Mohl, 2010:203).

With regard to foreign media outlets used as a source or reference by Albanian media outlets, some data come from the survey conducted in the context of this research with 30 international news reporters. In one of the asked questions, respondents were asked to list 5 of the foreign media outlets most used by them as a source or reference for international news. The results indicate that the foreign media or news agencies most used by journalists in Albania as a source for international news are the BBC, CNN, Reuters, AP, ANSA and VOA. The table below presents the number of those that cited each media outlet as a source.

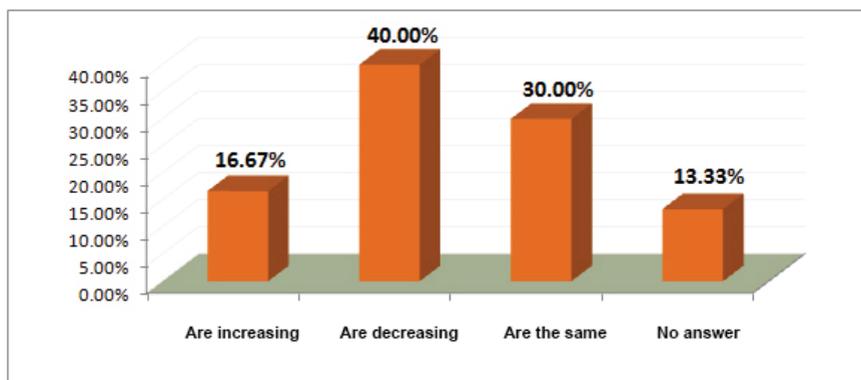
Table no.3: Number of reporters who mentioned each media outlet as a source

BBC	CNN	Reuters	AP	ANSA	VOA	The Guardian	Daily Mail	AFP
26	18	12	10	8	6	5	4	4

A rarer source included media outlets or international news agencies such as Sky, the New York Times, DW, Le monde, RAI, The Economist, The telegraph, Al Jazeera, etc.

The survey mentioned above also provides other data that further complete the picture of international reporting in Albanian media. With regard to human resources of this field, the survey shows that in 40% of Albanian media outlets, these human resources have been cut steadily, in 30% of them they are the same, and only in 16.67% of them these resources have increased. The latter are mainly media outlets that have been started in recent years. The graphic below presents the complete data:

Graphic no. 2: Trends in human resources dealing with international reporting



Aside from the shortened personnel working on international news, another problem is the excess burden on part of these personnel. Given that these personnel has limited space in the media outlet and because there is a small number of stories from the world, the reporters of this sector get engaged to work also on other sections.

The table below presents some data with regard to this phenomenon. As may be seen, only 11 of 30 surveyed reporters deal entirely with international news, while 15 others also work on stories for other sections of the media outlet.

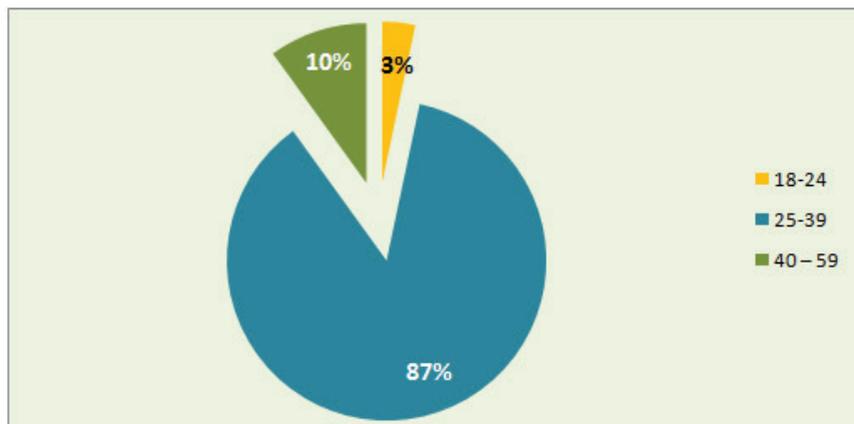
Table no.4: Personnel in your media outlet working on international news are engaged:

a	Only in world news	11
b	In world news as well as stories for other sections	15
c	No answer	4

On the other hand, there are also media outlets in which international reporting is entrusted to reporters from other sections or those who are free for the moment get to work on international news, thus reflecting a poor level of appreciation for this category of information.

The demographic data of the sample of 30 surveyed reporters may help us create an idea also about the age of those working on international news. As may be seen in the graphic below, the majority of surveyed reporters of this field (83%) belong to the 25 to 39 years age group, 10% are from the 40-49 years age group and 3 % belong to the 18 to 24 years age group.

Graphic no.3: International news reporters by age group



This situation of the predomination of the young age groups is valid not only for reporters of international news, but also in general for the entire corps of reporters working in the Albanian media. According to researcher Jonila Godole, of the general number of reporters in Albania, 42.2% belong to the 30-39 years age group while 42 % belong to the 20 to 29 years age group. Bringing these together, the age group of 20-39 years old makes up 84.2% of the general number of reporters (Godole, 2014:149).

The reasons for the predomination of young ages in the corps of Albanian reporters may vary. However, the most important of them has to do with the fact that the media market in Albania is relatively new. The majority of media outlets were born in the last two decades. Responding to this new market, human resources also developed for this area and in the majority of cases, they too were created in the last two decades. Meanwhile, the majority of reporters who were educated and worked in the propaganda media outlets during the communism period did not appear to be appropriate for the new and independent media outlets; thus,

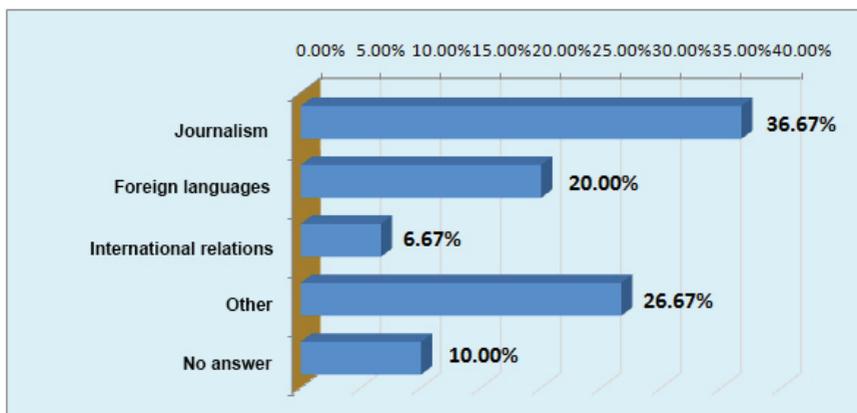
the newspapers, radio and television stations created during the transition period would be populated by young people mainly educated at Tirana University's Journalism Department, which was also a new department that only opened after the fall of communism, in 1993.

However, when it comes to reporters of international news, considering the typology of the western reporter of this field, we may say that the prevalence of young ages may be seen as a variable that reflects a lower level of experience. Meanwhile, it is common knowledge that the "experience" factor in international reporting in the media is very important and, quite often, makes a visible difference in the quality and standards of such reporting.

Beside the relatively young age of reporters, an important factor that affects the level and professional standards of international reporting is the professional education and qualification of reporters of this field. Based on our survey, it appears that 36.67% of reporters of international news, i.e. about one third, graduated from university in journalism; 20% studied foreign languages, 6.67% studied international relations, and 26.67% studied in branches different from the above three. The survey also shows a relatively small number of those who did not declare the profile of their education (10%).

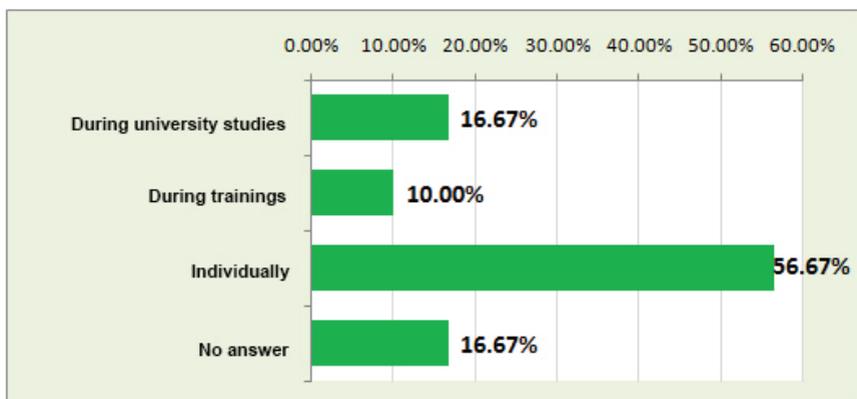
The data shows a problem that has been present throughout the transition period: part of those working in the media did not graduate in branches related to the profession but other ones.

Graphic no.4: Reporters of international news by their university major



In spite of the field of their university studies, the reporters of international news represent a special profile that is distinguishable from other ones. We tried to find out how they came to work in this profile and more than half of the respondents (56.67%) stated that they managed to specialize in this field thanks to their individual efforts, 16.67% due to university studies, and 10% due to training.

Graphic no.5: How did you specialized in international reporting



One notices that there are a very small number of those who built their work profile during university studies, which logically should be higher. Apparently, the teaching curriculum in the country's journalism schools leaves to be desired when it comes to specializing in the field of international reporting. A review of the curricula of the country's three journalism departments proves this hypothesis.

The Bachelor level of journalism studies at the University of Tirana has had for a long time only three profiles for training future journalists: political journalism, economic journalism and social-cultural journalism. International journalism did not exist as a profile and the specific courses related to it are very scarce, such as for instance, "Journalism Agency" and more remotely related "Media in diplomacy."

Only the Master level of studies in this department started in 2010 a separate profile called "European journalism," which included courses that were directly related to the field of international reporting, such as the course "Reporting international current affairs." Four years after it began, the profile was closed due to the low level of enrolment.

The University of Shkodra journalism department also did not include a profile for international reporting. The only approximate subject to this profile provided by this department is the course on "Agency journalism." The journalism department of the University of Elbasan does not include a profile or course that is directly or remotely related to the profile of international reporting.

In view of this situation, it is natural that while the profile is missing in universities, opportunities for training and specialization in the field increase. With regard to training organized with reporters of international news, 63.33 % of those surveyed stated that they were

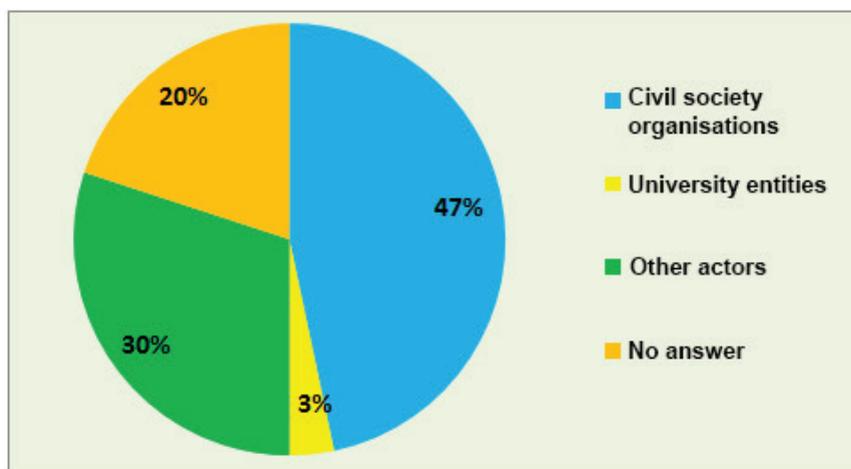
rare, 33.33 % of those surveyed said they were not aware of such training, and only 3.33% (1 in 30 persons) said that such training had been increasing.

Table no.5: Provided training was...

Frequent	3.33%
Rare	63.33%
Not aware of any such training	33.33%

With regard to the entities providing training in this area, the survey provides the following information:

Graphic no.6: Training of reporters is most often provided by...



As may be seen, entities providing more training in the area of international reporting are civil society organizations, among which the Albanian Media Institute stands out for organizing the

majority of such training courses. One notices in such information also that only 3 percent of those surveyed recognize university entities as providers of training programs.

Following this general presentation regarding the situation, human resources and the context of international reporting in the Albanian media, we will look in greater detail and in more concrete terms at the situation of international news in the press, television and the web.

3. International news in the press

As mentioned above, the four selected newspapers: “Panorama”, “Gazeta Shqiptare”, “Shqiptarja.com” and “Mapo” were monitored for a three-month period, from March 1 until May 31, 2016, including all issues of this period. During the monitoring and the empirical work, we identified, counted and coded the daily international news, comments/editorials/columns/opinions as well as articles of international sports news. Soft and celebrity news were not included in the monitoring.

During these three months, the newspapers Panorama and Gazeta Shqiptare issued a total of 92 issues, while the newspapers Shqiptarja.com and Mapo, which do not come out on Monday and Sunday respectively, i.e. only publish six days per week, published 79 issues each.

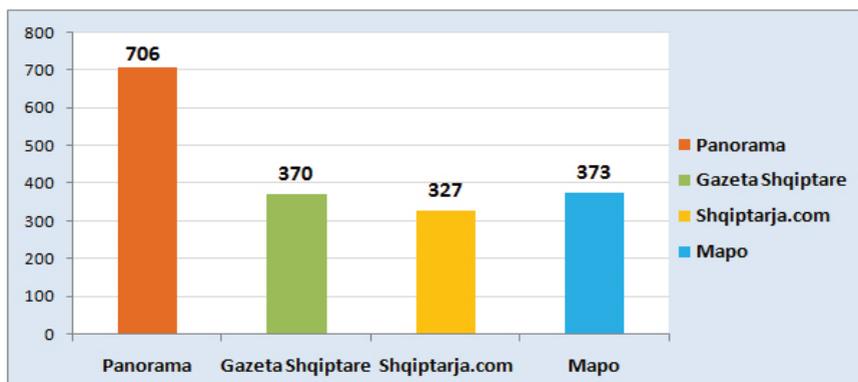
The analysis undertaken in this research study would have been more complete if the collected data could be compared to those of previous years, but such information is lacking. Thus, the comparative analysis that may be carried out in the context of this research is that between the four newspapers or two television stations among one

another and then between newspapers and television media as well as the web. Meanwhile, the database created for this research may be of use in the coming years to draw comparisons and highlight the trends of international reporting in Albanian media.

3.1. International news in the press – quantitative approach

The main focus and interest of this research study concentrated mainly on the category of the day's international stories. However, given that media in Albania demonstrates ample interest in international sports news, the research included such news in order to see which of these two popular categories of international news dominates the Albanian press. The following graphic presents the total number of international news published in each of the monitored newspapers:

Graphic no.7: Number of international stories by newspaper (March 1 – May 31, 2016)



As may be seen, the Panorama newspaper, which is also the best selling newspaper in the country, published a total of 706 international stories in three months. The figure is almost double the number of articles published in each of the three other newspapers.

The following table presents data regarding the general number of articles of both categories and the percentage taken up by the news of the day in the total of international news stories.

Table no.6: Number of articles from March 1 until May 31 and the percentage of the news of the day.

Media Outlet	News of the day	Sports News	Total	% of news of the day
Panorama	374	332	706	53%
Gazeta shqiptare	217	153	370	59%
Shqiptarja.com	254	73	327	78%
Mapo	166	207	373	45%

Meanwhile, we notice that the number of articles in the “news of the day” category in three of the newspapers is higher than the number of sports news. At Panorama newspaper, the ratio is 53% to 47% in favor of news of the day. At Gazeta Shqiptare, the ratio is enhanced further at 59 % to 41 %, culminating at Shqiptarja.com, which devotes even more space to news of the day, which takes up 78% of the total of international news. A different situation is seen at Mapo newspaper, whereby sports news dominates over news of the day 55% by 45%.

An analysis of the ratio between these two categories of news is important to highlight tendencies and priorities in international reporting in the Albanian press. As may be seen, although news of the day generally prevail, the relatively large number of sports news speaks to a kind of tendency to allow for more and more space to news of this category.

An important indicator for the presence of international news is the average number of stories per issue of the newspaper. Our monitoring produced the following data with regard to this average:

Table no. 7: Average number of international news articles per newspaper issue

Media Outlet	Total number of articles	Total number of newspaper issues	Average number of articles per issue
Panorama	706	92	7.67
Gazeta shqiptare	370	92	4.02
Shqiptarja.com	327	79	4.14
Mapo	373	79	4.72

Data shows that for the indicator “average number of international news articles per newspaper issue” as well, the Panorama newspaper is different compared to the three other newspapers, having an average about twice higher. Such an indicator shows that this newspaper reserves more space to international news compared to the other media outlets. An approximate estimate for international news shows that they take up about two pages in the normal 24-page issue of the Panorama newspaper. In the other three newspapers, the figure is 1 up to 1.5 pages per newspaper issue.

Another indicator of the level of appreciation that newspaper newsrooms show for international news is their presence on the front pages of the newspapers. This indicator is important because it reflects the place that international news takes in the agenda and hierarchy of these media outlets, their importance and the editorial care toward them. The following table shows data related to this indicator.

Table no.8: Percentage of international news appearing on the front page

Media Outlets	Total of articles	Number of articles beginning on front page	% of articles on front page
Panorama	706	21	3%
Gazeta shqiptare	370	23	6%
Shqiptarja.com	327	18	6%
Mapo	373	48	13%

In the case of this indicator, Panorama has the lowest percentage of international news appearing on the front page (3%), while Mapo has the highest percentage (113%), thus reflecting a relatively large difference from the first.

On this indicator, we may also do a kind of comparison with western media. The AJR-American Journalism Review research mentioned earlier provides some data that may serve as some kind of a basis for comparison. Thus, in the main American newspapers, the percentage of international news appearing on the front page changed from 9 percent in 1985 to 6% in 2010. For the main Albanian newspapers, this average is about 7%, very close to the average of American media and even a bit higher, especially considering that data for Albanian newspapers belong to 2016.

3.2. International news of the day in the Albanian press

As it is also the main focus of this research study, a more detailed specific analysis has been provided for international news of the day. As a start, we will look at the ratio between the three categories of this news mentioned above: 1. Foreign news at home, 2. Home news abroad, and 3. Foreign news abroad.

The ration between Foreign news at home / Home news abroad / Foreign news abroad.

This categorization is very useful for seeing more clearly what the priorities of the Albanian media are when it comes to the international news of the day. How much place do international news about events taking place abroad (foreign news abroad) take up? What about news about events taking place abroad but involving domestic characters or players (home news abroad)? What about international news about events taking place in the country (foreign news at home)?

The analysis of the ratio between these categories helps us see to what extent Albanian media are affected by the local element in international reporting and how much they are inclined to report simply international events that have to do with local factors or interests.

The processing of the monitoring data provides the following data that offer some kind of response to these research questions that we have raised.

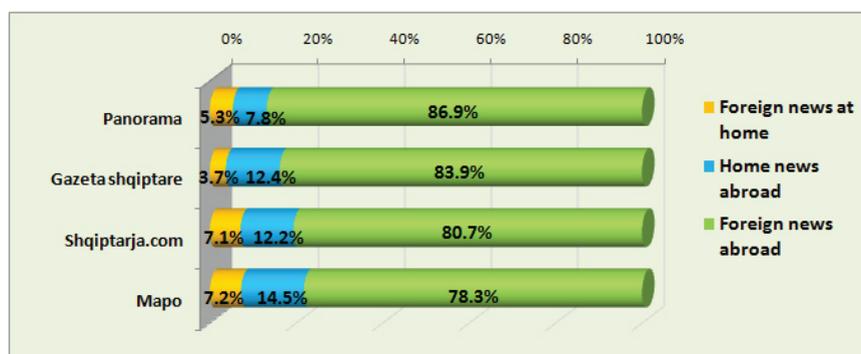
Table no.9: International news of the day by category and the % of foreign news abroad

Media Outlets	Foreign news at home	Home news abroad	Foreign news abroad	Total	% Foreign news abroad
Panorama	20	29	325	374	86.9%
Gazeta shqiptare	8	27	182	217	83.9%
Shqiptarja.com	18	31	205	254	80.7%
Mapo	12	24	130	166	78.3%

It is not difficult to observe in the table above that in spite of the presence of international news that involve domestic elements, news of the category “Foreign news abroad” take up the most part of international news of the day. They take up about 87% of the general number of international news of the day at Panorama, about 84% in Gazeta Shqiptare, about 81% in Shqiptarja.com and about 78% in Mapo. This shows that the local element in the press has a relatively small impact on the general number of international stories.

The ratio between the three categories of international news of the day is presented also in the following graphic:

Graphic no. 8: Percentage of international news of the day by category



Among the stories of the category “Foreign news at home,” one notices news stories about events such as the NATO Summit in Tirana, the meeting of the foreign ministerial in Durrës, visits by heads of other states or senior EU officials in Albania, etc. Meanwhile, the category “Home news abroad” features stories such as the visit of the Albanian PM, the Speaker of Parliament and the opposition leader in the U.S. as well as other visits of national leaders abroad. Yet, a considerable number of stories of this category refer to criminal

activities by Albanians who have committed criminal activities in different countries, etc. Also, the category also includes news stories about concerts by Albanian artists in the world, such as the concerts by sopranos Ermonela Jaho in London and Inva Mula in Belgrade, news about success stories of Albanians abroad, etc.

Sources of international news of the day

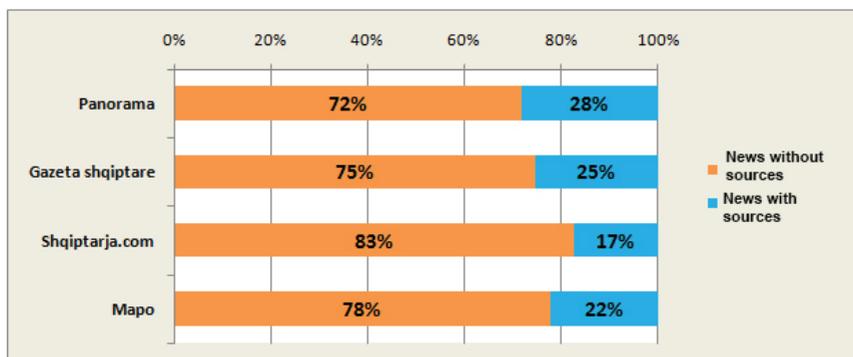
In the course of the empirical research undertaken for this research, we gave importance also to highlighting the sources used by Albanian media outlets in international reporting. First of all, it should be said that in not just Albanian media but also in world media, the number of international news produced by the personnel of those media outlets themselves is relatively low. Thus, according to AJR, in the eight main American newspapers in 2010, the percentage of international stories produced by the personnel of those outlets themselves reached 4% from 15% that it had been in 1985.

In the case of monitored Albanian newspapers, there is no data regarding the percentage of authentic news stories produced by the personnel of those media outlets. In almost one hundred percent of the cases in all four newspapers, the name of the story's writer is not displayed. The main reason for this is that for the most part, international stories are just adaptations or translations of stories published in world media, often without even quoting these media. Nevertheless, there are also stories that mention or quote the source of information. The number or percentage taken up by these stories in the general total of the news of the day are presented in the following table:

Table no.10: Number of stories that quote a source and their percentage

Media Outlet	Total of news of the day	No. of articles that quote a source	% of articles that quote a source
Panorama	374	106	28%
Gazeta shqiptare	217	55	25%
Shqiptarja.com	254	44	17%
Mapo	166	37	22%

Also, the following graphic presents a view of the ratio between stories without a source and those with a source for every media outlet:

Graphic no. 9: The ratio “sourced stories”/ “unsourced stories”

On an approximate average, only one fourth of the international news stories published in the monitored four newspapers contain or quote at least one source in their content. This speaks to the high presence of the phenomenon that Sonia Mikich calls “the world in the easiest way” (Mikich, 2010), or that Artan Fuga terms “reporting the world from the doorstep” (Fuga, 2015). Adding to these the other

fact of the lack of authorship, we may reach the conclusion that the original content of international news in the Albanian media is very small or almost inexistent, which raises question marks regarding the authenticity and accuracy of these stories as well as respect for copyright.

Ratio between long stories and short stories

The monitoring also provides data about the variable of “length of stories” published in each of the media outlets. For this variable, we used the categories of “long story” and “short story” in this research study, considering short any story that is up to 100 words and a long one any story that is more than 100 words. In some cases, short stories are classified also by the media outlets themselves, placing them under the section “briefly from the world.”

As may be seen in the table below, in two of the newspapers, namely Gazeta Shqiptare and Shqiptarja.com, long stories take up almost half of the international stories of the day. In the other two newspapers, there are two different sights. At Panorama, short stories dominate and take up about two thirds (66%) of the general number of news; at Mapo, long stories prevail and take up about three fourths (75%) of the general number of international stories of the day.

Table no.11: Number of short stories and long stories

Media Outlet	Short story	Long story	Total	% of long stories
Panorama	246	128	374	34%
Gazeta shqiptare	112	105	217	48%
Shqiptarja.com	132	123	255	48%
Mapo	42	124	166	75%

Graphic no. 10: Percentage of short stories and long stories



Geographical mapping of international stories of the day

The geography of international stories in the four monitored newspapers in the context of this research study differs from one media outlet to the other. In terms of quantity, the Panorama newspaper is the one that covered the greatest number of countries in three months of its international reporting, with 50 countries covered. Then comes Shqiptarja.com with 37 countries, next is Mapo newspaper with 31 countries and last Gazeta Shqiptare with 28 countries. For the Panorama newspaper, the most covered country, i.e. the one with the most number of stories, is the United States with 56 stories. For Gazeta Shqiptare, the most covered country is Belgium with 25 stories. In the case of Shqiptarja.com, the most frequently covered country is Kosovo with 32 stories and for Mapo newspaper, the most covered is Macedonia with 15 stories.

Table no. 12: Number of countries covered and countries with the greatest coverage

Media Outlet	Total of covered countries	Most covered country	No of stories – most covered country
Panorama	50	U.S.	56
Gazeta shqiptare	28	Belgium	25
Shqiptarja.com	37	Kosovo	32
Mapo	31	Macedonia	15

World experience with international media reporting features several approaches that prevailed from one country to another and from one media outlet to another. One of the most applied approaches in international reporting, which has spread even further in recent times also because of the economic crisis is that of “nearest area” (Russ-Mohl, 2010:203). This approach implies the prevalence of news coming from or related to the nearest countries in international reporting. In the case of the monitored Albanian newspapers, this typology might include newspapers Shqiptarja.com and Mapo, for which the most covered countries are also the ones that are nearest geographically, speaking: Kosovo and Macedonia. Aside from geographical proximity, the proximity in origin has also played a role, with about 30 percent of the population in Macedonia being Albanian and in the case of Kosovo 95%.

In some world media, there has also been noticed the approach of the “next door giant,” which implies the prevalence of news from

the closest biggest country, as is for instance Germany for some Swiss media outlets (Russ-Mohl, 2010:204). If such an approach were to be applied in Albanian media, news from Italy would prevail as the “next door giant” of Albania. However, this is not verified, at least not in the practice of the Albanian media outlets that were monitored. To the contrary, in one of the media outlets, namely Panorama, “the giant” is not a geographical neighbor, but a remote country such as the U.S. In the case of Gazeta Shqiptare, the largest or most covered country is not determined by any geographic proximity, but by the highest profile events, such as the terrorist attacks in Brussels.

This means that geographic proximity does not determine the frequency of coverage in every case. Nevertheless, the “nearest area approach” is considerably applied in the four monitored newspapers. This is proven by the fact that neighboring countries such as Kosovo, Macedonia, Turkey, Serbia or Greece are on the list of the most covered countries.

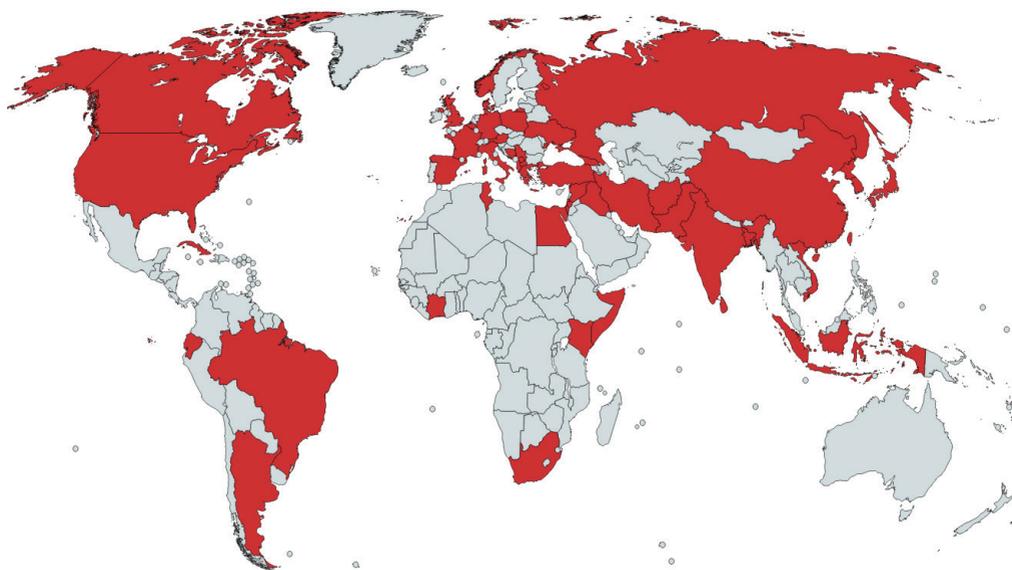
In order to have a more complete idea with regard to the geographic spread of international news in each media outlet, below is a list of countries covered by each media outlet, accompanied by a corresponding map. As may be seen in the mapping, Albanian media mostly cover the nearest area and it may happen that entire continents, such as Africa, South America, or Asia, are almost uncovered for three consecutive months.

Panorama Newspaper

Total of covered countries: 50 countries

List of covered countries: Italy, Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Austria, the Vatican, U.S., Canada, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Poland, China, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Sri Lanka, North Korea, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Israel, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Kenya, South Africa, Tunisia, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Cuba, Brasil, Ecuador, Argentina.

Map of countries covered by the Panorama newspaper

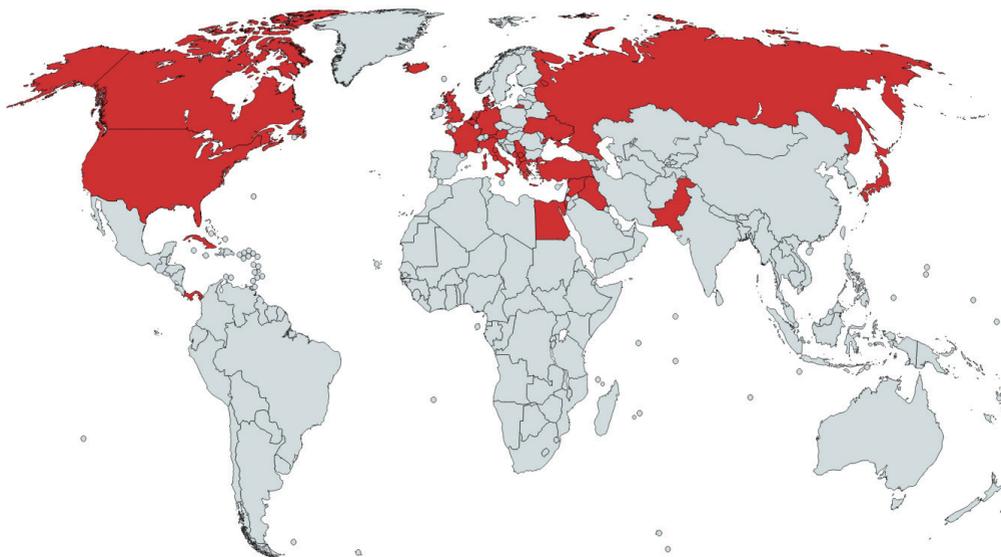


Gazeta Shqiptare

Total of covered countries: 28 countries

List of covered countries: Italy, Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Vatican, Netherlands, Iceland, U.S., Canada, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Japan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Cuba, Panama.

Map of countries covered by Gazeta Shqiptare

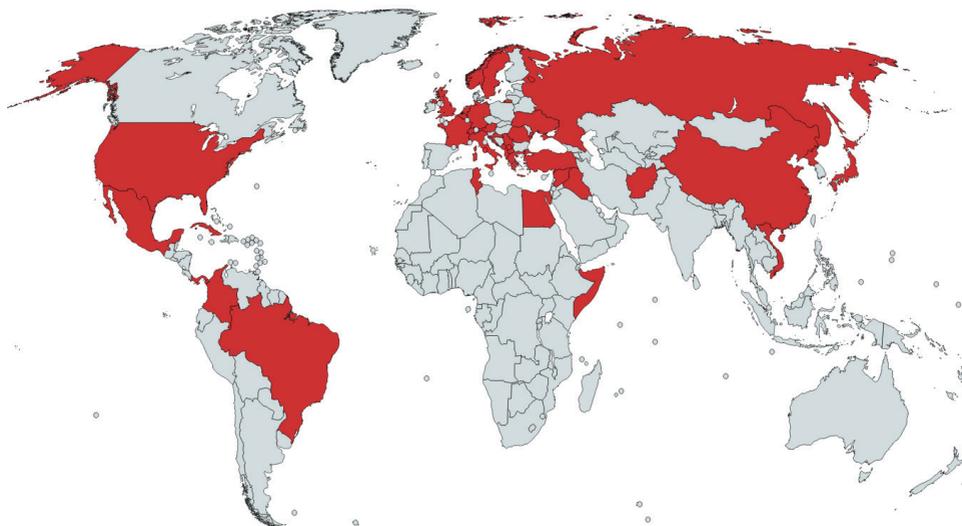


Shqiptarja.com

Total of covered countries: 37 countries

List of covered countries: Italy, Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Norway, Austria, Vatican, Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden, U.S., Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, China, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, Tunisia, Somalia, Cuba, Brasil, Columbia, Mexico, Panama.

Map of countries covered by Shqiptarja.com newspaper

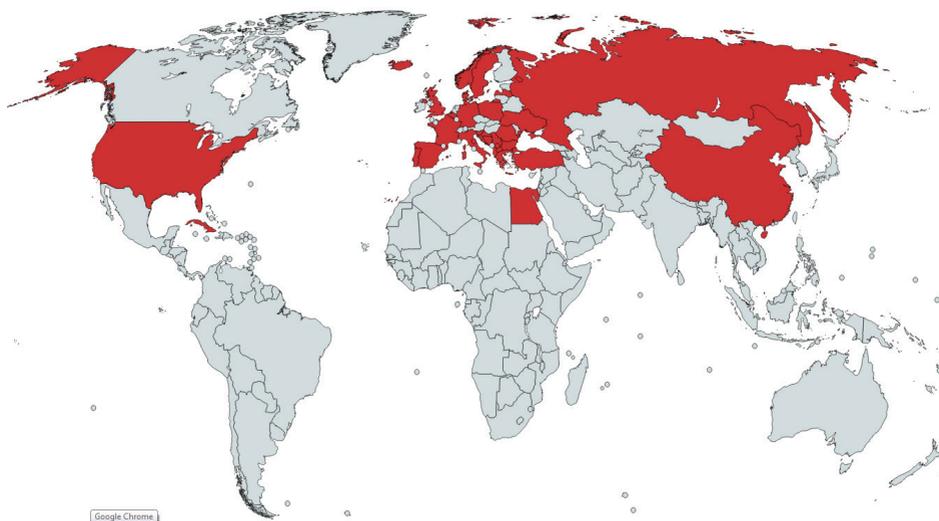


Gazeta Mapo

Total of covered countries: 30 countries

List of covered countries: Italy, Germany, France, Britain, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, Vatican, Latvia, Portugal, Iceland, Sweden, U.S., Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, China, Egypt, Cuba.

Map of countries covered by Mapo newspaper



However, besides news identified with a certain country, as noted above, there is also a group of news that do not relate to a single country and that we called in this research study as *transnational news*. Typical cases among this kind of news is part of those reporting on the “Panama Papers” scandal, some stories about international drug trafficking, as was the case of the so-called ‘Albanian Escobar,’ etc. The following table presents the number of transnational stories for each of the monitored newspapers:

Table no.13: Number of transnational stories for each of the monitored newspapers

Media Outlet	Number of Transnational Stories
Panorama	35
Gazeta shqiptare	41
Shqiptarja.com	34
Mapo	44

After looking at the geographic spread of international news in the country’s four main newspapers, let us look at the main events that dominated international reporting in these newspapers during March 1 until May 31, 2016.

Events dominating international reporting

The agenda of the Albanian media and its priorities in international reporting reflect the interests, ties as well as the geopolitical strategy of the country. After the emergence from the half-century communist isolation, Albania adopted the liberal-democratic system and, through a long process full of challenges, it is becoming part of the western European and Euro-Atlantic space and institutions. After NATO membership, the most important challenge for the country is the fulfillment of standards required to become also an EU member. In a survey conducted in 2015, 91 percent of Albanians would vote ‘in favor’ of EU membership.⁵ Meanwhile, Albania and Albanians are mentioned by different authors for a highly pro-American spirit.

5. *Human Development Report – Albania 2016*, UNDP, Tirana, 2016, p. 77

The priorities of the media’s agenda in international reporting are along the same lines with the process of the country’s integration into the Euro-Atlantic space as well as the collective conscience of Albanians that Albania is a European country and that its ‘fate’ is closely linked with developments in Europe and in the Western Hemisphere. This may be seen in the following list and ranking of events that dominated international reporting in the country’s four main newspapers, shown by the monitoring carried out in the context of this research.

Table no. 14: Ranking of events that dominated the 4 main newspapers

No.	Dominating events	Total of stories
1	Elections and other developments in the U.S.	99
2	Terrorist acts in Belgium	93
3	Developments in Kosovo	89
4	ISIS, terrorism and the fight against it	77
5	Emigrant and asylum-seeker crisis	76
6	Developments in Turkey	60
7	Developments in Greece	58
8	Developments in Macedonia	43
9	The “Panama Papers” issue	40
10	Developments in Serbia	22

As may be seen, the developments in the United States are at the top of dominating events, among which the presidential elections stand out in particular. Apparently, in the Albanian case, the practice of following the “next door giant” was not pursued; instead, it seems to have been that of following the “giant friend.” Nevertheless, it should be said that the great number of stories about the presidential

campaign in that country, for which there has traditionally been special attention, has been decisive in that regard. If we put aside the articles related to this campaign, stories about other developments end up being one third of the total of stories from and about the United States.

Second in the ranking come stories that have to do with the terrorist attacks in Belgium. All four main Albanian newspapers followed these events with maximal intensity, responsibility and seriousness and devoted relatively large space to them. During the monitoring period, there were terrorist acts also in other countries of the Middle East. However, for these events, the reporting space was smaller. Based on this fact, certain authors have articulated even theses of double standards applied by the Albanian media, which in fact does not stand, because in the case of Brussels, we are dealing with events that are much closer to us. And we are not talking just about geographic proximity, but also about systemic, cultural proximity as well as proximity of a common perspective. The future of Albania passes on the path toward Brussels and not in the opposite direction. Feeling part of the European space, it is only natural that the media devote much more space to events that take place precisely in this area.

In the monitored newspapers, we found a considerable number of stories about events in our neighboring countries, such as Kosovo, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia, thus proving the thesis of the prevalence of the “nearest area” in international reporting. We stressed also earlier that in the case of Kosovo and Macedonia, beside geographic proximity, there is also the proximity of common origin. Meanwhile, the presence of stories from Turkey also reflects Albania’s interest in this important geostrategic partner, which in certain contexts has been seen

even as a “next door giant” of Albania, or some kind of “Big brother,” not in the sense of the metaphor of the television show, but in the traditional Albanian sense about the position and role of the bigger brother.

Developments that have to do with the fight against terrorism and ISIS appear to have had a place of priority for Albanian media in the above ranking. Albania has joined the front of the fight against terrorism, considering this a vital battle for the future. This appears to have been reflected also in the agenda of the media.

The other two groups of stories that have to do with the crisis of emigrants and the “Panama Papers” reflect the importance of such developments to Albanian audiences and to the editorial policy of the Albanian press. The issue of emigrants and asylum-seekers resonates also with developments in the country as well as with a growing tendency for the emigration of Albanians in the past two years because of the economic crisis in the country. This situation has also increased sensibility to the crisis of Syrian emigrants. While the Panama Papers issue resonates with the major problems that exist in the country with regard to the phenomenon of “dirty money” and its dissolution into dubious investments across the country.

Presence of commentary on international developments

In a situation in which the latest news is becoming more of an exclusivity of online media, for many authors envisage a tendency toward analytical reports and commentaries for the press. However, this tendency is not verified in any considerable extent in the monitored Albanian newspapers. The number of editorials, columns,

opinions, etc., has been relatively small and a considerable part of them have been translated from foreign media. With regard to this situation, researcher Artan Fuga writes:

“Someone will say, well, here you are, we have news from the world, but in fact we only have the foam, their surface and nothing more, their spectacular aspects, but not any profound and continued reporting and, above all, without developing this presentation of international current affairs in all genres of journalism, such as in forums, analyses, commentaries, interviews, reportages by special envoys, etc.” (Fuga, 2015)

The monitoring that we conducted shows the following situation with regard to the presence of articles belonging to the genre of commentaries, which verifies the above observations and evaluations (see table below):

Table no.15: Number of commentaries by media and authors

Media Outlet	Number of commentaries	Foreign author	Albanian author
Panorama	37	15	22
Gazeta shqiptare	33	7	26
Shqiptarja.com	0	0	0
Mapo	44	24	20

Thus, the number of commentaries is relatively small and also, a good part of them, are translations of pieces by foreign authors. In fact, in the case of Shqiptarja.com, in three months, there was none

such. Even the number of analysts of international developments has been increasingly diminishing, making the void in Albanian media in this regard even more visible. Meanwhile, the Albanian diplomatic corps, aside from some very rare interviews or live feeds into television, provides no serious contribution in the media for the analysis of different international events or developments.

Besides the aspects analyzed above, it would also be of interest to look at the ratio that *soft* news from the world take up, but they were not part of the monitoring. Nevertheless, the survey of 30 reporters provides a piece of information with regard to this aspect. Thus, to the question what kind of stories prevail in the overall number of international stories, 13 of the respondents said that soft news prevail. This shows that the Albanian media have not escaped the “trend” of an increased presence of “low-calorie news lemonade” as Mikich calls this category of news (Mikich, 2001).

On the other hand, Albanian media have not been able to escape a kind of widespread typology of international reporting based on the four keywords “war/illness/criminality/ disaster,” as Mikich observes for a large number of western media outlets (Mikich, 2001). News stories out of this typology are rare even in the monitored Albanian newspapers, thus providing the situation of the prevalence of the world’s dark or dramatic side but leaving aside a large number of stories about events that produce optimism and a more positive perspective.

4. International news on television

The monitoring focused on television media outlets in this research was somewhat more limited than the one of the press. Thus, in the two national television stations Top Channel TV and Klan TV, we monitored only ten prime time news editions for each media outlet on ten random days during the period March 1, 2016 until May 31, 2016. For that reason and because of the differences and specifics of television outlets as compared to the press, it is impossible to carry out an extensive comparison between them. Nevertheless, a partial comparison, on those terms where it is possible, will be undertaken in this research study too. Meanwhile, there will also be a comparison between the two television stations themselves.

The dates of the monitored news editions are different from one another. The only date that is the same for both is March 22 and it was selected because the terrorist acts in Brussels took place that morning. We decided to monitor both television stations in the same day in order to look at the specifics and differences between them when covering an event of such a scale.

The ultimate object of the monitoring included international stories of the main newscast of 7:30 p.m. in both media outlets. From a quantitative point of view, we conducted a measurement of the length of each story and highlighted other data regarding the category of news, the location where it took place, the topic, etc.

International news on Top Channel

The conducted monitoring proves that the space that international news stories take up on Top Channel television is considerable. The data for this television station is presented below:

Table no.16: Length of international news on Top Channel

No	Date of news program	Total length (minutes: seconds)	Length of international news (minutes : seconds)
1	March 7, 2016	33 : 24	2 : 42
2	March 16, 2016	31 : 04	5 : 07
3	March 22, 2016	32 : 40	22 : 51
4	March 30, 2016	31 : 02	14 : 56
5	April 8, 2016	33 : 41	14 : 15
6	April 15, 2016	30 : 50	13 : 38
7	April 27, 2016	30 : 44	10 : 13
8	May 3, 2016	30 : 54	9 : 36
9	May 14, 2016	24 : 44	8 : 04
10	May 25, 2016	33 : 38	8 : 04
TOTAL		312 : 41	109:26

As may be seen, international news stories on Top Channel television take up on average about one third of the total time of the news programs. Thus, of 312 minutes and 41 seconds of the total length of the ten news programs, 109 minutes and 26 seconds belonged to international news stories.

However, understandably, the ratio between international news and clearly domestic news is different from one day to the other, depending on the intensity and significance of the domestic news and the number of high profile events from the world. Thus, when there were high-profile events in the country, such as for instance on March 7 and 16, international news took up less space. On a day when there were high-profile international news, as was for

instance March 22, the time length of international news was about two thirds of the general length of the newscast.

In looking for the reasons for this considerable prevalence of international news stories, we verified data such as the coverage in newscasts of numerous meetings or visits by Albanian leaders abroad or many other stories of categories containing a local element, such as the categories “foreign news at home” and “home news abroad.” The data and ratio of these two categories of news vis-à-vis the category “foreign news abroad,” presented in the table below, proves this situation.

Table no.17: Total length of international news of the day by category on Top Channel television

Media Outlet	Foreign news at home	Home news abroad	Foreign news abroad	Total	% e Foreign news abroad
Top Channel	20 : 05	42 : 59	46 : 22	109 : 26	42.3%

In order to create an idea about the presence of international news with a local element, it should suffice to take a look at the events that were reported, such as for instance: the case of the so-called “Albanian Escobar” or other instances of international drug trafficking that involved Albanians, the visit of Speaker of Parliament Ilir Meta, of PM Edi Rama and opposition leader Lulzim Basha to the United States, the decree for the martyrization of the clerics of the Catholic Church signed by the Pope, the visit of President Bujar Nishani to the CoE, the ministerial of Western Balkans Foreign Ministers, the international meeting in Albania of representatives of the world chrome industry, an EU report on Albania, the echo of the Albanian PM’s statements about Donald Trump in the U.S., the WB report on Albania, an Albanian ballet performance in Belgrade, the visit

of Commissioner Johannes Hahn to Tirana, the visit of Prosecutor General Adriatik Llalla to the U.S., the concert by Ermonela Jaho in London, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Tirana and many others.

This considerable presence of international news with a local element speaks to an agenda that is considerably influenced by this element. This category includes particularly plenty of reports involving Albanian political leaders, which also reflects a level of politicization of the agenda of the Albanian media and, at the same time, the increased mediatization of politics, which seeks and uses often particularly the television media outlets for its public relations.

In terms of the geography of international news stories, Top Channel TV covered during these ten news editions a total of 12 countries, namely Greece, Italy, the United States, Kosovo, Macedonia, Italy, Austria, Vatican, Croatia, Switzerland and Serbia, as well as events involving several international institutions, such as NATO, the EU, and UEFA. As may be seen, international reporting often was localized in the “nearest areas” and in the Euro-Atlantic space, thus displaying an evident absence of news stories from other parts of the world.

International news stories on Klan TV

The monitoring indicates that the time that international news stories take up on Klan TV as well is quite considerable. Similarly with Top Channel, they take up about one third of the general time of the news editions. Thus, of 295 minutes and 51 seconds in the monitored ten news programs, 96 minutes and 43 seconds belong to stories from international reporting. More detailed data is provided in the table below:

Table no. 18: Length of international news stories on Klan TV

No	Date of newscasts	Total length (minutes : seconds)	Length of international news stories (minutes : seconds)
1	March 5, 2016	29 : 24	9 : 42
2	March 13, 2016	30 : 20	12 : 51
3	March 22, 2016	30 : 49	16 : 17
4	April 12, 2016	31 : 03	12 : 53
5	April 18, 2016	25 : 16	5 : 31
6	April 24, 2016	30 : 15	10 : 14
7	May 6, 2016	31 : 07	8 : 21
8	May 10, 2016	30 : 35	5 : 01
9	May 19, 2016	30 : 46	8 : 35
10	May 30, 2016	26 : 16	7 : 18
TOTAL		295 : 51	96:43

Just as in the case of Top Channel TV, the ratio between international news stories and clearly domestic stories on Klan TV is different from one day to the other. On this TV channel too, in those days when there are high-profile international stories, as were the terrorist acts in Brussels on March 22, international news stories take up a relatively long time and, in this concrete case, more than half of the total time of the news edition.

There is a similarity between the two monitored television stations also in terms of the ratio between international stories with a local element and stories of the category “foreign news abroad” in terms of the time they take up. As may be seen in the table below, the news category of “foreign news abroad” takes up 48.6 % of the total time

of international stories, which is very close to the 42.3% figure that they took up on Top Channel TV. Nevertheless, there is a certain difference and it is in favor of Klan TV.

Table no. 19: Length of international news of the day by category on Klan TV

Media Outlet	Foreign news at home	Home news abroad	Foreign news abroad	Total	% e Foreign news abroad
Klan TV	14 : 32	35 : 10	47 : 01	96 : 43	48.6%

However, if we compare the average percentage taken up by “foreign news abroad” on television to the average in the print press, we notice that there is a large difference between these two types of media. Form the level of 82.45 % that this average was in the four main newspapers, in the case of the two main television stations, it only goes up to 45.45 %. The reasons? They may be several. But we think that the most important is the greater presence of international news with a local element due to the more politicized agenda of television stations and their being more open to public relations by the main institutions of the state and politics. Another reason may be the greater presence on television (especially on Klan TV) of events that have to do with criminal activities abroad that involve Albanians.

Among the news on Klan TV with a local element we may point to the stories that report on events such as: criminal events and those of international drug trafficking that involve Albanians, the ousting from Italy of an Albanian linked with ISIS, the successes or failures related to Albanian sportsmen abroad, the oncoming of refugees to the border with Albania, the visit of President Bujar Nishani to Strasbourg, the IMF report on the Albanian economy, the visit of

PM Edi Rama to the United States, the visit of the Albanian Deputy PM to the United Nations, the visit of President Bujar Nishani to Croatia, the fight between Albanian and English inmates in a prison in England, the statements of the Italian police chief about the so-called “wiretapping issue,” etc.

This category includes in a relatively large number and with almost daily frequency especially stories that are related to criminal activities by Albanians in the world. It has been observed that the newsroom of Klan TV reserves unusual follow-up and coverage to this category as well as to stories that have to do with Albanian sportsmen around the world.

With regard to the geography of coverage, it is broader than that of the other television station, Top Channel. The ten monitored news programs of Klan TV covered a total of 21 countries and, besides, some of these were stories about international institutions, such as the EU, NATO, FIFA, CoE, IMF and the UN. The list of countries covered by Klan TV includes Italy, Turkey, Greece, the United States, Spain, Thailand, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, the Great Britain, the Vatican, Romania, Belgium, France, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Brasil, Croatia and Poland. Thus, the total number of countries covered by Klan TV is about twice as big as that of Top Channel television. The geography of the news is also more extensive as news editions include stories even from remote countries such as Thailand or Brasil. The Klan TV’s news rubric “Briefly from the world” plays a role here as it usually includes 5-6 news stories in about 2 minutes.

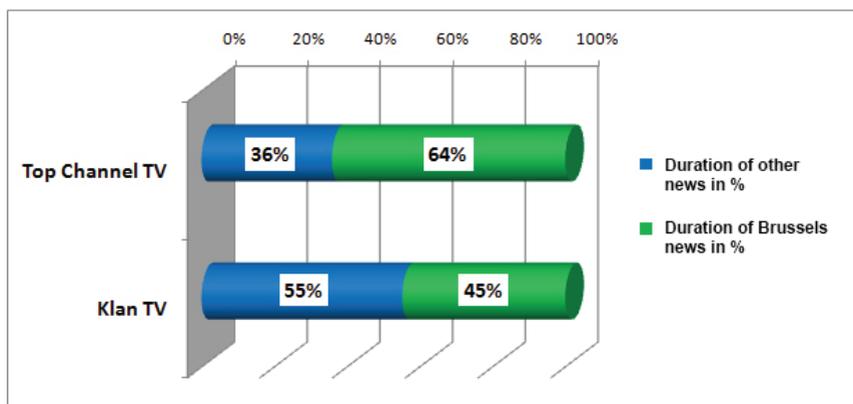
With regard to priorities, Klan TV too is focused on reaching mainly the “nearest areas” in terms of a geographic, cultural or systemic proximity.

Reports on the March 22 terrorist acts in Brussels

As was noted earlier above, in the case of the terrorist acts in Brussels, we monitored the news programs of both television stations – Top Channel TV and Klan TV – on the same day. It should be emphasized that news stories about this event came first in the newscasts of both television stations. The prime time news program of March 22 on Top Channel lasted for a total of 32 minutes and 40 seconds, of which 21 minutes and 3 seconds, i.e. about 64% of the time was devoted to the reports on the events in Brussels. The news edition on Klan TV lasted for 30 minutes and 49 seconds and of these, 13 minutes and 47 seconds, i.e. about 45%, were devoted to the events in Brussels.

This situation is presented graphically below:

Graphic no.11: Percentage of time taken up on the day of the events in Brussels



As may be seen, Top Channel, compared to Klan TV, devoted more time to reporting about the terrorist attacks that had taken place in Brussels.

In order to analyze the steps and context of the reporting on this event, let us look separately at the framework of the reporting and its elements for each of the two media outlets:

Top Channel

Story on the event and live report
from correspondent in Brussels _____ 7:33



Reactions by world leaders to
the terrorist attacks _____ 2:36



Security at Rinas Airport.
Tirana-Brussels flight cancelled _____ 5:27



Albania and terrorism.
Security situation in the country _____ 3:28



Echo and security measures
in Kosovo _____ 0:55



Testimony from Brussels.
“Live” feed of Albanian citizen there _____ 1:44

Klan TV

Report on event and live report
from correspondent in Brussels _____ 7:15



Albania and terrorism.
Security situation in the country _____ 3:05



Reactions by world leaders
to the terrorist attacks _____ 1:40



Reactions by Albanian leaders
to the terrorist attacks _____ 1:47

From a general view, both these media outlets have a similar structure of the reporting framework for this event. As may be seen, both TV stations start off with the introducing report on the event and provided almost the same time to the story (Top Channel TV devoted 7 minutes and 33 seconds and Klan TV devoted 7 minutes and 15 seconds). During the newscast, both TV stations used *live* feeds with their correspondents in Brussels. Meanwhile, aside from the report on the event, both media outlets devoted a similar number of minutes to the reactions by world leaders as well as to the security situation in Albania.

Aside from the similarities, the following differences stand out:

- Top Channel devoted a longer time and broader context to the topic of security in Albania in correlation with the terrorist acts in

Brussels; it also devoted a separate story to the echo of the event and the security situation in Kosovo.

- Klan TV devoted separate story to the reactions by Albanian leaders
- Top Channel devoted separate story to the situation and reaction of Albanian citizens in Belgium and, to that effect, it offered a *live* feed with an Albanian citizen who lived in Brussels.

Both the connection made and the reporting by both media outlets to the security situation in the country may be considered an appropriate element to the structure of reporting on the event. Meanwhile, the differences consist in the scope of the background and context of the event.

As a conclusion, we may say that both media outlets devoted the proper interest and time to the event. They built a relatively complete agenda of the reporting on the event. Also, the reporting includes live feeds, which provide footage from the site of the event, aside from footage obtained from foreign television stations.

5. International news on the web

The selected online media outlet, Albeu.com, is a genuine online news portal. This online media outlet was monitored for a one-month period, from May 1, 2016 until May 31, 2016.

Albeu.com is one of the best-known online media outlets in the country. It was founded on July 4, 2003⁶ and is part of the category of online media that are labeled “digital native,” i.e. that were born on the web. The publisher of this portal is Idaver Sherifi, one of the

6. *Online media in Albania*, AMI, Tirana, 2014

pioneers and visionary and successful founders of online media in the Albanian language.

The portal has been constructed in such a way as to serve at the same time as a news portal for Albania, Kosovo and the Albanian population in Macedonia. Therefore, its three major sub-divisions are labeled Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. News from the rest of the world fall under the category “World.”

Based on the monitoring conducted for the needs of this research study, it results that Albeu.com is a news website that devoted considerable space to international news. In the concept of its structure, it is not confined within the geographic boundaries of Albania, but within the Albanian-speaking space of the Balkans. Therefore, as we noted, a separate space has been devoted to news from Kosovo and from Macedonia, and this space is considerable. Nevertheless, following the same methodology as for the other media outlets, in this research we will classify news from Kosovo and those from Macedonia in this portal as international news, given that the study is geographically localized in Albania.

The first observation we made after moving from the monitoring of news in newspapers and in televisions to the monitoring on Albeu.com is that online media today have definitely taken over the exclusivity of news. Year after year, news is increasingly migrating over toward the web in Albania too. The edge appears in several aspects: both in quantitative terms and in terms of geographic reach, not to mention the specific advantages of the web, such as the speed of conveying the news, the interactivity, the multimediality, the infinite space, etc.

Within the time span of one month, under the category “News – World” of Albeu.com, a total of 162 news stories were published; 463 news stories were published in the category “News – Kosovo” and 295 news stories were published in the “News Macedonia”

category, with a monthly total of international news of 920 stories. So, in just one month, Albeu.com had published about 23 percent more international news stories than had been published in three months in the country's best-selling daily newspaper, Panorama. The data may be seen in the following table:

Table no. 20: Number of international stories on Albeu.com for the month of May 2016

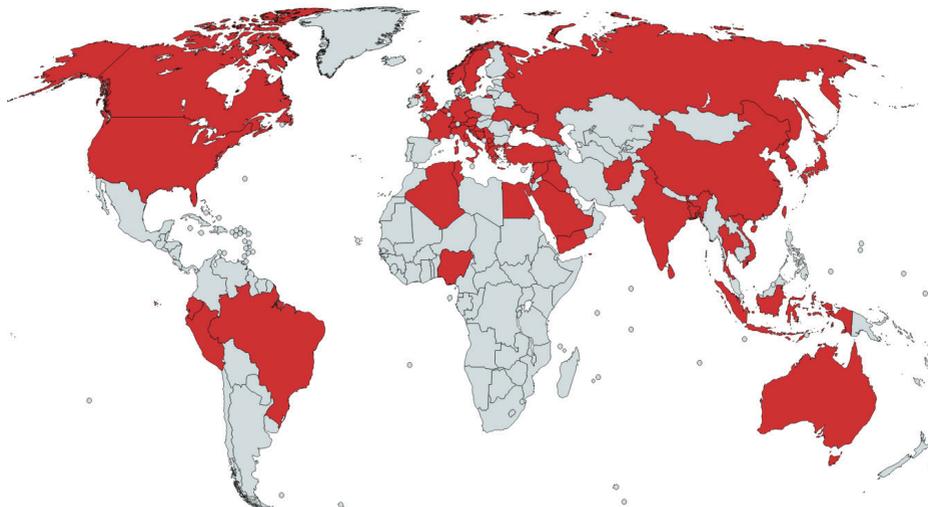
No.	Category	No. of stories
1	News – World	162
2	News – Kosovo	463
3	News – Macedonia	295
	Total	920

One advantage of online media that we have verified is the one relating to the geographic spread of international news. Thus, a total of 48 countries were covered with news within one month on Albeu.com, a figure approximate to the number of countries covered by the Panorama newspaper in three months. The following list and map provides the geographic spread of international news published on Albeu.com:

Total of covered countries: 48 countries

List of covered countries: Italy, Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Austria, the Vatican, Switzerland, USA, Canada, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Greece, Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, China, Vietnam, Taiwan, India, Sri Lanka, North Korea, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Bangladesh, Australia, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Egypt, Nigeria, Tunisia, Algeria, Peru, Brasil, Ecuador.

Map of countries covered by the news portal Albeu.com



Considering the fact that a very large number of articles have to do with developments in Kosovo and in Macedonia, we may say that Albeu.com clearly applies the “nearest area” approach, which in this case is not just geographic proximity but has also the element of common origin.

Leaving aside Kosovo and Macedonia, the most covered country appears to be the U.S. with 31 articles in one month. Among these stories, more than half of them have to do with the presidential election campaign in the country, thus reflecting the same tendency as that in the print or television outlets.

The events that dominate this media, also due to its profile, are developments and events in Kosovo and Macedonia.

6. Conclusions

The monitoring and analysis of the situation of international reporting in the Albanian media was the primary focus of this research study. We viewed its undertaking as indispensable especially because the library of studies on the Albanian media has lacked research dealing specifically with international reporting. Meanwhile, an important reason involved the developments of the last decade in the media, which features a decline in the number of international news stories in the main media outlets, especially in print and television as well as a shrinking of the geography of coverage of these news stories.

The main object of the research study involved international news of the day in the press, television and web, but the monitoring also included international sports news from the world, as a relatively large component of international news. In order to avoid any semantic confusion, instead of terms such as “external news” or “news from the world,” the research employs the term “international news” and the process has been termed “international reporting.”

The study confirms that after the fall of communism and the establishment of pluralistic democracy in the country, the conditions were created for the emergence and development of free, independent and pluralistic media. This led to a multiplication of the capacities and space also for international reporting. A large number of channels of international media information existed in Albania during the past 25 years after the fall of communism.

Nevertheless, during the last decade, due to the crisis in the media and because of the emergence of new channels of online information, a decline has been noticed in international news in

the press and television. These media outlets do not have a special editorial structure for international news and it is mainly covered by the news department or newsroom. Meanwhile, human resources for this field have been shrinking in about 40% of the media outlets.

Because of economic difficulties, Albanian media also lack or have a very limited number of correspondents abroad. Thus, none of the newspapers has correspondents in other countries. From television media, Top Channel TV has its own correspondents in Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Italy, Great Britain and Belgium. Klan TV and ABC News have a correspondent in Brussels and Ora News TV has a correspondent in Italy. Of the online media, Albeu.com has its own correspondents in Kosovo and Macedonia, while Balkan Insight has correspondents in all countries of the Balkans. The lack or limited number of correspondents has been to the detriment of the authenticity and quality of international reporting.

The monitoring and survey also highlighted problems of the lack of university profilization in the area of international reporting as well as inadequacy of capacities for training and specialization in this field.

Furthermore, human resources working on international reporting are at a relatively young age and this reflects a low level of experience. Most of the surveyed reporters of this field (83%) belong to the age group of 25 to 39 years old.

We can also reach some conclusions with regard to the tendencies and standards of international news. Thus, the monitoring of daily newspapers, one notices that the newspaper with the highest circulation of all (Panorama) also features a higher number and greater coverage of international news stories. Likewise, Panorama also features the highest number of articles per issue, with an

average of 7.67 stories per issue, a figure that is twice bigger than the average of the other newspapers.

Meanwhile, the indicator of the presence of international news stories on the front page ranks Panorama the last with only 3% of the stories and the figure goes up to 13% in the case of daily newspaper Mapo.

With regard to the ratio between categories of international news of the day, the analysis of collected data indicates that comparing the average percentage taken by “foreign news abroad” on television to the average in the press, we notice that there is a major difference between these two types of media. From 82.45% that the average was in the four main daily newspapers, it only reaches 45.45% in the case of the two main television stations. The reasons have to do with the greater presence of international news with a local element on television because of the more politicized agenda of television stations and their being more open to public relations’ efforts by the main institutions of the state and of politics.

With regard to sources of international news, in an approximate average, only one fourth of the international news stories published in the four monitored newspapers contain or quote at least one source for their content. Meanwhile, in almost one hundred percent of the stories published in all four newspapers, the name of the article’s author is not used. Therefore, we may reach the conclusion that the original contents of international news in Albanian media is very scarce or almost inexistent, something that raises questions about the authenticity and accuracy of these news stories as well as about the level of respect for copyright.

With regard to the geography of the spread of international news stories, again the best-selling newspaper Panorama has the highest

number of covered countries, a total of 50. In terms of the typology of the spread, the approach of the “nearest area” prevails in Shqiptarja.com and Mapo as the two countries most covered in terms of the number of stories are the two that are closest in terms of geography: Kosovo and Macedonia. Yet, the “nearest area” approach also sees considerable application in the two other monitored newspapers. Unlike many international media outlets, Albanian newspapers do not feature the “next door giant” approach, which means the prevalence of stories from the closest biggest country.

With regard to events that dominated international reporting, the agenda of the Albanian media and its priorities in international reporting reflect the interests, ties and geopolitical strategy of the country. At the top of events that dominate the agenda are developments in the United States of America, led especially by events that are related to that country’s presidential election campaign. Apparently, the Albanian media does not apply the practice of following the “next door giant” but rather that of following the “giant friend.” Second in terms of ranking are news stories that have to do with the terrorist acts in Belgium. However, news stories about events involving our neighbors such as Kosovo, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and Serbia are in considerable numbers, thus proving the thesis of the prevalence of the “nearest area” in international reporting in the Albanian media.

Another problem remains the scarce number of commentaries and of analysts of international developments, making the void in the international reporting of Albanian media outlets even more evident.

Referring to the large presence of soft stories from the world, we may say that Albanian media too have not escaped the ‘trend’ of the increased presence of “low-calorie news lemonade” as Mikich calls this category of news.

Also, Albanian media did not escape another typology that is quite widespread in international reporting based on the four keywords “war / illness / criminality / disaster.” News out of this typology are rare in the monitored Albanian media outlets, thus bringing forth the prevalence of the dark or dramatic side of the world, and leaving aside quite a large number of news stories about those events that generate optimism and a more positive perspective.

Moving from the monitoring of international news in newspapers and on television to the monitoring of news in the online media, we find that presently online media in Albania have definitely taken over the exclusivity of news in general and of international news in particular. International news is increasingly migrating toward the web in Albanian media as well. The advantage may be seen in several aspects: both in quantitative terms and in geographic reach, not to mention the specific advantages of the web, such as the speed of conveying the news, the interactivity, multimediality, the infinite space, etc. In the course of one month alone, Albeu.com had published about 23 percent more international news stories than were published in the course of three months in the country’s best-selling newspaper, Panorama. During one month, a total of 48 countries were covered with news, a figure that is close to the number of countries covered by the Panorama newspaper in the course of three months.

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