

Norwegian Newspaper Coverage of Distant Conflicts

*A Comparative Analysis of the Coverage of the 1994
Rwandan Genocide and the 2017 Rohingya Crisis*

Roman Prokopenko



Master thesis in journalism studies at the Department of Media and
Communication

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IV

Abstract

This thesis examines the coverage of distant crises in the Norwegian national press. The purpose of the research is to draw a historical comparison between the coverage of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the 2017 Rohingya crisis in three Norwegian newspapers: Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang. Literature around news selection criteria, factors influencing Western foreign conflict reporting and framing perspectives guides the analysis of the development of the Norwegian distant conflict coverage. This project utilizes a quantitative content analysis to gather and analyze the data from articles collected over a period of five to six months with the goal of detecting patterns in the reporting of the two conflicts. The key findings reveal that the coverage of the Myanmar crisis experienced an overall decline compared to the Rwandan genocide. Furthermore, the reporting of Myanmar was less comprehensive, received less nuanced coverage and focused more on violence and human suffering. The discussion highlights the influence of the geopolitical narratives surrounding these two crises and how the changing media landscape impacted the coverage. The reporting exhibits a pattern that prioritizes stories that can be connected to Western interests and the global political situation. In addition, the focus on intensity and drama is a major driving force behind the news selection.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Studying Norwegian newspaper coverage of distant conflicts

The theme of this thesis is distant conflict reporting in the context of Norwegian newspaper press. More specifically, the aim is to explore the contrasts and similarities in the coverage of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the 2017 Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. In both of these conflicts, innocent civilians have been persecuted, killed and driven to flee their homes on the basis of their ethnicity or religious beliefs. These crises can also be defined as “other people’s wars” from the perspective of Western media because of a lack of narrative framework connecting them to Western involvement or interests. How Norwegian media report such faraway crises is a key element of focus in this thesis.

The practice of conflict reporting in Western news media is always adapting to societal changes, the ebbs and flows of politics and technological advancements. In the 1990’s, new types of conflicts overseas began to attract Western media attention. Of course, crises and local wars in the so-called third world were not a new phenomenon, but the end of the Cold War altered the landscape of global conflicts.¹ The absence of the “us versus them” narrative that dominated conflict coverage previously, paved way for the media to pay more attention to “other people’s wars”. These wars are in other words conflicts that do not involve the troops of Western nation-states.² Nevertheless, civilian populations have been targeted by combatants, in many cases on the basis of their ethnic background, religion or culture. In an increasingly globalized world, the moral duty of the media to highlight human rights abuses cannot be ignored.

Since the 1980’s and 1990’s, many developments have occurred in Norwegian foreign reporting departments and practices. Norway’s involvement in the global environmental protection efforts, peace negotiations and Norwegian foreign aid policies have led to increased allocation of resources to global news stories. In addition, increasing public interest in trade and business connections have fueled the need for more plentiful and

¹ Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1996), 16.

² Tumber, «Covering War and Peace», 386-397.

accurate foreign reporting³. Examining the developments in Norwegian foreign conflict reporting between 1994 and 2017 is one of the objectives of this study.

This thesis seeks to find out how Norwegian newspapers covered two distant conflicts that occurred in two different eras. One of the major changes that has influenced Western conflict reporting since the Rwandan genocide has been the emergence of the War on Terror. When the footage of the planes striking the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001 were broadcast to a global audience, Western societies were forced to reassess their perceptions of warfare and face an emerging threat to civilian lives in Western democratic states.⁴ Such a shocking event naturally received an enormous amount of coverage, also in the Norwegian press. The consequent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan involved US and NATO forces, bringing Western-led warfare and conflicts back into the media narrative. Not only that, but there was a prevailing “us versus them” attitude in the messaging coming from US officials.⁵ The study around the coverage of the Myanmar crisis takes into account the impact of this geopolitical narrative backdrop.

The developments in the newspaper industry since the mid-1990’s will also be taken into consideration when reviewing the coverage of the two conflicts in this project. Newspapers have had to modernize their layout and content composition in order to adapt to the emerging competition from digital media. This process will be further elaborated in chapter three. Part of the analysis of the findings is focused on discussing what impact the changes in the media landscape have had on conflict reporting.

One of the roles of journalism in democratic societies is to uncover abuses of power, injustice and be an advocate for the people. This is commonly known as the societal watchdog function of the press.⁶ It has been argued that this practice should, and to a certain extent has been, extended to global issues and events due to the increasing international economic, cultural and political connection and interdependence.⁷ From a human rights perspective, journalists have a social responsibility to uncover and inform the public about

³ Slaatta, «Journalistikkens makt i den globale tidsalder», 136-166.

⁴ Tveiten, *Nødvendige nyheter* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2006), 52.

⁵ Nohrstedt and Ottosen, *New Wars, New Media and New War Journalism* (Gothenburg: Nordicom, 2014), 51.

⁶ McNair, «Journalism and Democracy», 237-249.

⁷ Tveiten, *Nødvendige nyheter* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2006), 27-28.

human rights abuses of all kinds.⁸ Bringing these issues into the public discourse is the starting point for providing relief for victims in the short-term, protesting against the aggression and ultimately creating discussions about possible resolutions in the long-term. From an academic point of view, this thesis is an examination of how Norwegian journalists approach the responsibility of covering human rights abuses and distant conflicts in 2017, and whether or not there have been any significant changes since 1994.

As a first-generation immigrant and a Norwegian citizen, I have always been aware of the privilege of living in a peaceful democratic country. This has allowed me to focus my attention outward and eventually I became interested in global human rights issues and the necessity to fight for the underprivileged. As a journalism student, I believe that the media has an obligation to promote humanitarian values by reporting distant conflicts and suffering in an accurate, timely and responsible manner. At the same time, Norwegian foreign conflict coverage has always struck me as insufficient or inadequate, which is why I decided to make this the focus of this thesis. In fact, the original idea was conceived as I observed a distinct difference between the amount of coverage the Rohingya crisis received from the Norwegian media in comparison with the British press. These overlapping factors, in addition to my desire to learn about the situation in Myanmar resulted in the conceptualization of this thesis. Having previously studied the role of Western media during the Rwandan genocide and being impacted by it, I decided to include it in the research. The historical element will provide an important perspective that will shed some light on the evolution of Norwegian foreign reporting since the 1990's.

1.2 Research questions

The overall purpose of this thesis is to look at how changes in the global geopolitical sphere and the newspaper industry have influenced the news selection practices of Norwegian newspapers in regard to foreign conflicts. The research utilizes a quantitative content analysis to gather data from three Norwegian newspapers: *Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen* and *Verdens Gang* over a period of five to six months. The analysis of the data is focused on agenda-setting theories, the impact of news values on foreign conflict coverage and how the conflicts were framed. Galtung and Ruge's research on factors which influence Western

⁸ Shaw, *Human Rights Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 2.

media coverage of foreign conflicts will instruct the analysis of news selection patterns that guided the reporting of the crises in Rwanda and Myanmar. How much attention is paid by the Norwegian media to conflicts that do not affect “our people”? Furthermore, how much of the coverage is framed in order to make these conflicts significant to the Norwegian public? Has there been any observable changes in this regard between 1994 and 2017? In order to address these issues, I have developed the following research question:

How was the Myanmar crisis of 2017 covered by Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang compared to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda?

To draw out more specific findings that will help addressing the research question, I developed these supplementary questions:

- How does the coverage of the two conflicts compare in regard to agenda-setting and priority?
- Which aspects of the conflicts did the newspapers focus on?
- How does the selection and distribution of sources compare between the two conflicts?

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, this being the first and introductory chapter. Chapter two briefly presents the historical context of the two conflicts, identifies the actors and further elaborates on the choice of theme. Chapter three is the theoretical framework for the research and analysis, focusing on defining conflict reporting, how this practice has historically evolved, which factors drive the selection of foreign news, and explaining why it is an integral part of journalism. Furthermore, chapter three examines Norway’s role in global development and peacemaking and how this corresponds with Norwegian foreign reporting. Chapter four will present the methodological approach of this thesis, before presenting the data from the content analysis in chapter five. Chapter six discusses the findings within the theoretical framework and with the guidance of the supplementary research questions.

Finally, chapter seven addresses the main research question and provides a summary of the main takeaways.

2 Historical Background

Like any other conflict, the Rohingya crisis has very unique historical, political and cultural aspects to it. The most recent outbreak of violence coincides with an era of Western conflict reporting that is dominated by the narratives surrounding Islamic terrorism, the War on Terror and other Middle Eastern conflicts where Western interests can impact the news coverage. This thesis focuses on Norwegian newspaper reporting of the Myanmar crisis because it represents distant conflict coverage that is detached from the current dominant geopolitical narrative. The main point of interest in this research project is to find out how Norwegian newspapers cover distant conflicts that do not have any links to Norwegian society, or any obvious connection to Western political interests. The inclusion of the Rwandan genocide is based on the fact that it provides a comparative and historical element to the analysis of this type of conflict coverage in the Norwegian press. In addition, the two conflicts share certain similarities, although they are not exactly alike. Like Myanmar, Rwanda holds no cultural significance in Norwegian society, and the coverage of the genocide cannot be directly linked to Western interests. Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 will provide some historical context for the two conflicts, identify the actors and explain the events around which the research is conducted. Chapter 2.3 will highlight the contrasts and similarities of the two conflicts and elaborate on why they were chosen for this study.

2.1 The Rwandan Genocide

Rwanda is one of many African countries that has been haunted by the colonial divide-and-conquer tactics. Under Belgian rule, which began in 1924⁹, the Tutsi minority group were favored for positions of influence and power and gradually became the dominant, ruling class in Rwanda. In 1934, the Belgians introduced an identity card system that would include the “ethnicity” of the card holder – by indicating either Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. The same year, it was determined by a census that 85% of the population were Hutu.¹⁰ Tensions between the groups grew as the Tutsis had to enforce the brutal Belgian rule, as the Hutus

⁹ Magnarella, «The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda», 807.

¹⁰ Ibid: 808.

were forced into hard agricultural and infrastructural labor, and suffered harsh consequences if they protested or did not meet the requirements.¹¹

During the 1950's, a mobilization effort towards independence began to gather momentum, only furthering the divide between the Hutu and Tutsi populations. In 1959, tens of thousands of Tutsis fled Rwanda to neighboring countries after a revolt organized by the Hutu to overthrow the Tutsi monarchy took place.¹²¹³ In the next decades, the country remained deeply affected by ethnic tensions.¹⁴ The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was eventually formed by exiled Tutsis, and in 1990, the group invaded Rwanda after years of refusal to allow Tutsi refugees to return to Rwanda.¹⁵ On 6th of April 1994, the plane carrying president Juvénal Habyarimana was struck by a missile, causing a crash which killed everyone on board.¹⁶ There were major disputes over which group had actually carried out the assassination. Hutu extremists laid the blame onto the RPF, while some claimed that it was extremists within the Hutu military, the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), who shot down the plane.¹⁷ Almost immediately, Hutu militias began brutally killing government opponents. Hate propaganda inciting the killings of Tutsis and Hutu opposition was broadcast on the radio. A militia group called Interahamwe began to meticulously kill, mutilate and torture Tutsis.¹⁸ After three months, 800,000 Tutsis and between 10,000 and 30,000 Hutus lost their lives in the massacres. Around two million people were internally displaced and another two million fled the country.¹⁹ Many of the refugees were Hutus who had participated in the genocide. In fact, what remained of FAR and Hutu militias wanted the refugees to return to the country to “finish the job”.²⁰

It could be argued that the genocide in Rwanda cannot be seen as completely uncoupled from the Western interests, given the post-colonial history of the country. However, the non-intervention and the lack of interest in the conflict until the refugee crisis developed, from Western media and states alike, is at least in part due to a lack of risk to

¹¹ Magnarella, «The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda», 808.

¹² Ibid, 809.

¹³ BBC News, «Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter».

¹⁴ Magnarella, «The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda», 809-810.

¹⁵ Ibid: 810-811.

¹⁶ BBC News, «Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter».

¹⁷ Magnarella, «The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda», 815.

¹⁸ BBC News, «Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter».

¹⁹ Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda genocide* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 29.

²⁰ Magnarella, «The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda», 816.

Western countries and the overall worldwide political balance. When the mass-killings broke out, there were four hundred Belgian troops stationed in Rwanda. They were only deployed to rescue European citizens and eventually withdrew from the conflict zones.²¹ The Rwandan genocide is widely recognized as one of the most infamous examples of substandard, misrepresentative and untimely distant conflict coverage in Western media. Noam Schimmel writes:

“The Rwandan genocide did not appear out of nowhere, it had historical, political and cultural precursors which the media failed to examine and report. The media uncritically disseminated government claims that the genocide was a civil war, a paroxysm and spontaneous outburst of violence rather than a meticulously planned and executed project of extermination of all Tutsis in Rwanda by the government, army, militias and Hutu civilians.”²²

Ibrahim Seaga Shaw argues against the notion that the genocide was an unplanned and anarchical event, pointing to the fact that there was a military and armed militia in place, which would mean that there was a chain of command. Furthermore, a United Nations commander in Kigali had been informed of the fact that months before the killings began, there was an unusually large number of machetes being imported into Rwanda.²³ When the genocide broke out in early April of 1994, only a few local journalists were reporting on it. Western media exhibited a distinct lack of interest for the genocide, as was evident by the fact that journalists arrived after the genocide was ostensibly over.²⁴ Susan Carruthers explains the lack of early Western media presence in Rwanda due to the fact that news organizations saw the withdrawal of the United Nations troops and feared for the safety of their employees.²⁵ In addition, the Western media were preoccupied with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in May 1994, and this meant that the situation in Rwanda was not prioritized. The first Western journalists who arrived in Rwanda were in fact the same that had finished their assignment in South Africa and had traveled to Rwanda on their way home.²⁶ Their late arrival meant that they had missed the genocide but witnessed the beginning of the refugees fleeing Rwanda. Thus, the story in the Western media was framed as a refugee crisis, which was problematic due to the fact that many of those who fled

²¹ Shaw, *Human Rights Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 135.

²² Schimmel, «An invisible genocide», 1126.

²³ Shaw, *Human Rights Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 137.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 136.

²⁵ Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 226.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 226-227.

were indeed the perpetrators of the genocide.²⁷ Carruthers adds that this distortion had an impact on the response from NGOs and the UN, who focused their attention on assisting the refugees who had left Rwanda instead of helping those who were internally displaced, or supporting the newly formed RPF government in restoring the country's stability.²⁸

2.2 Myanmar, the Rohingya people and the 2017 crisis

The root of the conflict stems from the systemic and widespread discrimination of the Burmese Muslim minority population in a predominantly Buddhist country. The Rohingya are one of the many ethnic minorities in Myanmar with a unique language and culture.²⁹ Since the implementation of the 1982 Citizenship Law, the government has been denying the Rohingya citizenship rights, keeping them in perpetual statelessness.³⁰ Because of this, they are lacking a range of human rights, including social, cultural and economic rights, as well as access to education and employment.³¹ The majority of the Rohingya live in the Rakhine state, situated in the Northwestern part of Myanmar on the border to Bangladesh. The government is adamant that the Rohingya people are Bangladeshi illegal immigrants.³² There has been little to no possibility for naturalization for the Rohingya due to very stringent and restrictive laws. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have been relocated and forced to comply with very dubious citizenship assessment programs by the Burmese government. Those who refuse to participate risk facing years of imprisonment in detention camps.³³

There has been tension and a history of violence between the majority Buddhist population and the Muslim Rohingya in Rakhine since the colonial period in the 1930's, and later under waves of rising Buddhist nationalism in 1978, the 1990's and in 2001. The most recent outbreak of violence was sparked in June 2012 when an Arakanese³⁴ woman was raped and murdered by three Muslim men. Some days later, ten Muslims were killed by a group of Arakanese men, which triggered more violence from both sides. In October 2012 the tensions reignited when townships, villages and mosques were attacked in a coordinated

²⁷ Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 225.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 228.

²⁹ BBC News, «Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis».

³⁰ Kingston, «Protecting the world's most persecuted», 1167.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² BBC News, «Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis».

³³ Kingston, «Protecting the world's most persecuted», 1168.

³⁴ Arakan is the former name of the Rakhine region.

and organized manner.³⁵ Human Rights Watch revealed that local authorities helped spread anti-Rohingya sentiment between June and October 2012:

“Local officials and community leaders engaged in an organized effort to demonize and isolate the Muslim population as a prelude to murderous mob attacks,” Robertson said. “Moreover, since the bloodshed, the central government has taken no action to punish those responsible or reverse the ethnic cleansing of the forcibly displaced Muslims.”³⁶

Eyewitness accounts describe how security forces did nothing to stop attacks on the Rohingya, and in some cases joined in with the violence. Satellite images showed massive destruction to towns and villages, and subsequently 125,000 Rohingya and non-Rohingya Muslims fled to displacements camps.³⁷

The tension and violence carried over to 2013 and 2014³⁸, as well as October 2016, when nine police officers were killed. Officials believe that the attack was carried out by Muslims, and the violence that ensued forced around 87,000 Rohingya to flee.³⁹ On the 25th of August 2017, the conflict escalated even further when Rohingya militants attacked government forces.⁴⁰ The government responded by launching a “clearance operation”, which was described by United Nations officials as a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing”.⁴¹ Over a thousand people were killed in the initial attack and at least 6,700 were killed in the following months, according to Médecins sans Frontières.⁴³ By the end of 2017, more than 660,000 displaced Rohingya Muslims fled across the border to Bangladesh.⁴⁴

2.3 Rwanda and Myanmar as examples of distant conflict coverage

I decided to compare the coverage of the Myanmar crisis and the Rwandan genocide because the conflicts are similar in some respects. In both cases, discrimination and persecution of one group of people based on their ethnicity (and also religion in the case of

³⁵ Brooten, «Blind Spots in Human Rights Coverage», 135.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, «Burma: End ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ of Rohingya Muslims».

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Brooten, «Blind Spots in Human Rights Coverage», 135.

³⁹ Ratcliffe, «Who are the Rohingya and what is happening in Myanmar».

⁴⁰ McPherson, «Dozens killed in fighting between Myanmar army and Rohingya militants».

⁴¹ Ratcliffe, «Who are the Rohingya and what is happening in Myanmar».

⁴² UN News, «UN human rights chief points to ‘textbook example of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar’».

⁴³ BBC News, «Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis».

⁴⁴ Médecins Sans Frontières, «Rohingya refugee crisis».

the Rohingya) was a large element in the conflicts. In Rwanda, this resulted in genocidal mass-killings and a massive refugee crisis. Without wishing to downplay the losses that the Rohingya have suffered, the crisis thankfully never reached the genocidal levels of Rwanda. However, as the United Nations have pointed out, it seems clear that the Rohingya are victims of ethnic cleansing. And by all accounts, the Burmese government does not recognize the Rohingya people as lawful citizens, and in fact have labelled them as “Bengalis” or illegal migrants from Bangladesh. Both the Rwandan genocide and the Rohingya crisis exhibit elements of conflict based on ethnic divisions, extreme violence, human suffering and refugee crises.

From the point of view of media coverage, the two conflicts share a similar level of geographical and cultural proximity to Norwegian readers. Both conflicts took place on different continents and in environments that can be quite unknown for the average Norwegian reader. The only points of possible resonance were the presence of French and Belgian troops rescuing Europeans in Rwanda, and the very loose association between the Nobel committee and Aung San Suu Kyi, whose leadership of Myanmar oversaw the mistreatment of the Rohingya people. In other words, the conflicts do not quite fit the standard narratives of distant conflict reporting in Western press, i.e. the possibility to frame the conflict in an “us (Western democratic states) versus them (enemies of said Western democratic states)” dichotomy. Nor are there any other clear elements to make the coverage more significant or culturally resonant for Norwegian readers.

The main contrast between these conflicts, besides their unique dispositions and intricacies, is that they took place in different eras of conflict coverage. As chapter three will outline in more detail, the Rwandan genocide erupted soon after the end of the Cold War. The news media had to adjust their coverage to new types of wars and conflicts. The Rwandan genocide is infamous in the field of conflict reporting for the way it was (mis)reported by Western media. Noam Schimmel writes that British and American journalists abdicated their responsibilities as public watchdogs by not questioning statements from the US and European governments that no genocide was taking place, despite evidence of the contrary. Instead the conflict was framed as incomprehensible tribal violence, perpetuating postcolonial African stereotypes.⁴⁵ A lack of logistical resources in and around

⁴⁵ Schimmel, «An invisible genocide», 1129.

Rwanda made it difficult to cover the genocide, but news agencies also showed a lack of willingness to commit resources to send journalists to cover the situation in a timely manner. Furthermore, not wanting to disturb Western sensibilities with the atrocities from Rwanda was cited as another reason for the poor coverage.⁴⁶ In many ways, Western news media chose the easy road when it came to covering Rwanda. This was evident from the fact that the refugee crisis received far more attention than the genocide, because it was an easier story to frame.⁴⁷

The way in which the Western press mismanaged the Rwandan genocide is an example of why clear, committed and honest reporting during distant conflicts and humanitarian crises is needed. Included in this is the act of giving distant conflicts priority on the agenda, although as we shall see in chapter three, news selection is a complicated process that is influenced by several different factors. This thesis will focus on the prioritization of these two conflicts, and the factors that might have influenced the coverage. What do the findings reveal about how distant conflict reporting in Norwegian newspapers has changed in the intervening 23 years? To reiterate, the Rwandan genocide falls under the umbrella of distant conflict coverage in the post-Cold War era, while the crisis in Myanmar happened during the era where conflict reporting has been dominated by the War on Terror paradigm. This thesis aims to compare the coverage of these two conflicts against the backdrop of two different paradigms of conflict reporting, which will provide context for the discussion of the findings. The similarities the crises share from a human rights perspective, in terms of the violence, and their distant nature in regard to Norwegian news, enable a fair comparative analysis to be conducted.

⁴⁶ Schimmel, «An invisible genocide», 1130.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

3 Theoretical Frameworks

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation of this thesis. It focuses primarily on what conflict coverage entails and why it is an important part of journalism. The main points include the agenda-setting function of the press, what influences news selection, and how the framing of conflicts influences the coverage. Despite sharing certain similarities, the Rwandan genocide and the Myanmar crisis in 2017 occurred in two different eras of conflict reporting. There have also been developments in the media landscape in the intervening years. This chapter will review these changes in order to highlight the factors that can influence conflict coverage. Furthermore, this will be reviewed through the prism of Norway's efforts to build its reputation as a peace-building nation, and how Norwegian journalism relates to this process.

3.1 What is conflict reporting?

One of the roles of journalism in Western societies is to be a public watchdog that uncovers and reports on wrongdoings. In a global and highly interconnected world, this practice extends to reporting on human rights abuses that happen overseas, and it is a crucial channel for providing a voice for victims. Reporting distant conflicts puts them on a national agenda which increases the possibility of political discussions about possible interventions, relief efforts, or other ways of supporting those who are suffering. In Norway, the press is considered to be part of the democratic process, meaning that having a free and independent press is a crucial precondition for protecting the principles of democracy such as a free exchange of ideas and having access to information that will form a public debate about current affairs.⁴⁸ The Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press (Vær Varsom-plakaten) states that:

“1.1 Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Information and Freedom of the Press are basic elements of a democracy. A free, independent press is among the most important institutions of a democratic society.

⁴⁸ Bjerke, «Kvalitet i journalistikk», 226-250.

1.2 The press has important functions in that it carries information, debates and critical comments on current affairs. The press is particularly responsible for allowing different views to be expressed.”⁴⁹

Thereby, the professional guidelines state that the Norwegian press has a specific mission in society, which is focused on reporting on news stories that are in the public’s interest, and those that allow for different voices and opinions to be heard and considered. This is reflected in studies that have shown that journalists and editors take their mission seriously, stating that the intended purpose of covering significant (as in the public’s interest) stories is to influence public opinion and the elected officials, and to affect the political sphere.⁵⁰ In terms of covering distant conflicts, this may refer to the way the conflict in question relates to Norwegian interests and indeed Norway’s role in the global political sphere as promoters of peace and democracy – which I will elaborate on later in this chapter.

Conflict reporting is difficult, as it requires journalists to consider agenda, be precise about facts, and to report on different aspects of the conflicts such as war or violent clashes, human rights abuses, the political discourse and refugee crises. Covering faraway conflicts requires more resources and ways to manage logistical difficulties connected with the distance of the conflicts. It is also not a given that a distant conflict will get any attention in the media, as there are underlying news-selection criteria and agenda-setting mechanisms that play a role in deciding which stories make it in a newsroom.

Another factor in news-selection relates to the process of making sense of events and occurrences, in other words the construction of reality through journalism. Gaye Tuchman’s research on this subject put into question the long-held belief that news are merely reflections of events out there in the world. Instead, she argued that, the very process of making news is a way to organize facts about world events, and frame them in a way that it becomes meaningful. When producing news, journalists and editors make decisions regarding sources, angles and wider frames of context for a story to inhabit. The facts and information are put into contemporary cultural and societal frames in order for them to have meaning.⁵¹ This notion is connected to human psychology and the way we contextualize experiences and

⁴⁹ Pressens Faglige Utvalg, «Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press».

⁵⁰ Bjerke, «Kvalitet i journalistikk», 226-250.

⁵¹ Tuchman, *Making News* (New York: Free Press, 1978), 184, 192-193, 195.

events to fit within familiar frames that make them comprehensible to us.⁵² This concept extends to the realm of journalism and is broadly defined as *framing*. How a distant conflict will be framed depends entirely on the decision that journalists and editors make. Perhaps to compensate for the geographical and cultural distance, conflicts such as the Rwandan genocide and the Rohingya crisis will be framed in a way that will connect with Norwegian readers. This could be done in a number of ways, for example by using Norwegian sources or selecting angles that will link the story to Norwegian matters.

Typically, though, when a conflict erupts or escalates, it is so dramatic and unexpected that putting it into a conflict narrative is sufficient for it to make the news agenda. In such cases, headings, photographs and narrative may be used to have the strongest impact on the reader.⁵³ Stuart Allan writes:

“Indeed, an addition to helping to define what is significant to know, frames have far-reaching implications for how claims made by sources are selected (or not) as newsworthy, the narrative conventions guiding the ways in which they are reported, and the possible consequences for influencing public perceptions.”⁵⁴

Susan Carruthers writes that framing decisions have the potential to negatively influence the representation of the ‘others’, meaning the victims of a conflict or a genocide. Essentially, her argument is that the media tends to treat people in these situations as passive objects, powerless victims who are in need of rescuing. Furthermore, she points out that in some cases, like the Rwandan genocide, the events can be underreported and underexamined, leaving the audience with a sense that a humanitarian crisis was “natural”, unavoidable and did not involve any human agency.⁵⁵ Rwanda is a very apt example of this inattention, because not only did the media initially miss and failed to explain the genocide, but also focused on the fleeing Hutu refugees, creating a frame in which they were the victims. This lack of nuance in the reporting may also lead to a fatigued response from the audience, simply because conflicts of this nature tend to be reduced to inexplicable tragedies, or as Carruthers terms it – “the sameness of all suffering”.⁵⁶ To ascertain the level of nuance and informative reporting, I created a category in my dataset that views how the stories are

⁵² Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 68.

⁵³ Bjerke, et al., «Nyheter og nyhetsproduksjon», 16-36.

⁵⁴ Allan, *News Culture* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), 77.

⁵⁵ Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 236.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 237.

distributed by which aspects or themes the journalists and editors chose to highlight as the story focus. For example, how much of the coverage is devoted to violence or human suffering as opposed to talks of resolution or the condemnation of aggressors?

Simon Cottle describes war as “quintessentially newsworthy” because it involves drama, conflict, violence and shock. Wars and conflicts also follow human interest stories that can evoke strong feelings from the reader. On top of this, wars and conflicts evolve over time and provide journalists with new stories that can be turned into narratives.⁵⁷ Stig A. Nohrstedt and Rune Ottosen argue that the media are very powerful actors that have the potential to legitimize crises in the process of reporting them.⁵⁸ In journalism, there are a set of agreed-upon criteria or news values that drive the news selection and determine if a story is newsworthy. If we accept the premise that newspapers are a product targeted at an audience, the content has to fulfil certain criteria in order to attract the audience. Stig Hjarvard presents the most common criteria that make news meaningful to an audience:

- *Significance*: News should report on events or issues with significance for many people or society at large.
- *Intensity*: News should report on conflicts or unexpected occurrence giving priority to actions and the responses of the actors involved.
- *Topicality*: News should report on current events, i.e., what has just happened and what is likely to occur in the immediate future.
- *Closeness*: News should report on issues or events that are close to the audience. This proximity may be geographical, cultural, or psychological.⁵⁹

Distant conflicts will by and large hold relevance in the news because they satisfy the criteria of intensity and topicality; in most cases the beginning stage of conflict reporting covers some sort of dramatic, violent, and oftentimes unexpected event that has recently taken place. It is also reasonable to assume that there will be further developments to report on, thus giving newspapers an expectation of a continuing stream of information that can be processed into news stories. Whether or not conflicts like the Rwandan genocide and the Rohingya crisis appear significant to the Norwegian people or the Norwegian society in general depends partly on the framework in which the conflicts are presented. A Norwegian

⁵⁷ Cottle, *Mediatized Conflict* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), 76-77.

⁵⁸ Nohrstedt and Ottosen, «Mediatization and Globalisation», 149-164.

⁵⁹ Hjarvard, «The study of news production», 87-105.

aid worker finding themselves in the midst of the violence can come to represent “one of us”, and thus adding personal significance to the story. Likewise, such a scenario could make up for the geographical distance to the conflict and bridge the cultural and psychological gaps that may exist between Norwegians and the people affected by these crises.

Furthermore, these conflicts do not exist in a political vacuum, as they bring up discussions among governments, the United Nations and NGOs. These discussions may not directly involve Norway but could still have an impact in terms of foreign aid policies. Further along in this chapter I will discuss Norway’s role in the global political landscape and its self-image as a nation that promotes peace, human rights and democratic values. In a globalized world, matters that may not on the surface seem as relevant to Norway as a nation, can have significance in a broader geopolitical sense. Stig A. Nohrstedt and Rune Ottosen write: “This global outlook is particularly important in the field of war journalism because of the ramifications that new and asymmetric wars have for international norm construction, particularly with respect to conflict management and collective security.”⁶⁰

However, there is an argument that distant conflicts and human suffering should transcend the traditional news selection criteria *because* we are part of a globalized world and thus have a moral duty to report on human rights violations in order to help those who are affected. This point calls back to the paragraph of the Code of Ethics of the Norwegian press that states the importance of a variety of voices to be heard, in this case the voices of the victims of violence and tragedy in different parts of the world.

3.1.1 Galtung and Ruge: The structure of foreign news

In the 1965 article titled *The Structure of Foreign News*, Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge wrote specifically about how world events become news. Because the world is a vast place, a number of different events happen in different parts of the planet at any one time. Which events that catch the attention of journalists and become stories is determined by a number of factors laid out in this paper. In a way, it is an extension of the news values, but specifically relate to events that happen across the world.⁶¹ On Galtung and Ruge’s paper, Paul Brighton and Dennis Foy write: “The key premise of their argument is that we need to

⁶⁰ Nohrstedt and Ottosen, «Mediatization and Globalisation», 149-164.

⁶¹ Galtung and Ruge, «The Structure of Foreign News», 65.

attune to events for them to mean anything, and for them to mean anything they need to have some form of cultural connection.”⁶² In other words, the factors also relate to *how* an event is framed and reported on. I will now present and summarize the factors and expand on how they are relevant for my own research.

1. *Frequency*: using the radio signal as a metaphor, the authors explain that the event has to match the frequency of the news medium to have a higher chance of being picked up. In the case of newspapers, the stories should have a certain rhythm to match the daily output of news, therefore standalone incidents are likely to be prioritized over trends and developing processes.
2. *Amplitude*: an event has to reach a certain threshold of amplitude to be recorded as news. Unexpected, dramatic and shocking events have a higher likelihood of becoming news items.
3. *Clarity*: for the event to be noticed, the signal has to be as clear and unambiguous as possible. Journalists and editors prefer stories that can be described as simply as possible.
4. *Meaningfulness*: this factor refers to the cultural relevance of the event. Culturally distant events may have a lower probability of getting noticed but can acquire significance through other means, such as the way the story is framed.
5. *Predictability*: the event should match pre-existing expectations or other similar *types* of stories. For foreign conflict reporting, this means that the stories will likely match existing frames and pre-images of what journalists and audiences expect from distant crises based on past experience and mental biases.
6. *Unexpectedness*: a good news story is likely to be unexpected or rare, but “within the meaningful and the consonant”, as the authors explain.⁶³
7. *Continuity*: once an event becomes news, it will gather momentum and stay in the news cycle as it develops.
8. *Composition*: newsrooms aim for a certain balance of content (for example between domestic and foreign news) in the overall composition of the newspaper.

⁶² Brighton and Foy, *News Values* (London: Sage, 2007), 6.

⁶³ Galtung and Ruge, «The Structure of Foreign News», 67.

According to Sigurd Allern, these factors are considered by Galtung and Ruge as relatively constant, meaning that they do not tend to vary with cultural and political circumstances.⁶⁴ Therefore, the authors added another four factors that they considered to be important for influencing what kinds of events tend to become news stories in North-Western parts of the world (or in Western journalism): (9) focus on élite nations, (10) focus on élite people, (11) focus on specific persons and (12) focus on negative events.⁶⁵

The reference to élite nations and people is to point out that stories will have a higher chance of being published in Western news if nations or people of influence in the global decision-making processes are involved. As the authors point out: “The actions of the élite are, at least usually and in short-term perspective, more consequential than the activities of others: this applies to élite nations as well as to élite people.”⁶⁶

In regard to the focus on persons, Galtung and Ruge write: “The more the event can be seen in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals, the more probable that it will become a news item.”⁶⁷ The news tend to use person-focused reporting because it lends itself well to the medium. Interviews are an effective way to gather and report information and create a photo opportunity with a specific source. The audience are also more likely to identify with a story if it is focused on or told through a person that they can identify with.⁶⁸

Finally, negative events tend to get a lot of attention because they satisfy many of the aforementioned eight criteria. These types of events are usually unexpected, intense and dramatic, and there are usually further developments that enable a continuous flow of news. They can also reaffirm pre-existing notions that so-called developing nations are in constant turmoil and unrest.⁶⁹

The relevance of these factors for this thesis is that they will provide context for discussing the potential contrasts and similarities between the coverage of the Rwandan

⁶⁴ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 58.

⁶⁵ Galtung and Ruge, «The Structure of Foreign News», 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

genocide and the Rohingya crisis. How much of the coverage was focused on negative events, i.e. violence and human suffering? Was there more or less focus on elite people and nations in one of the conflicts? How much of the coverage was person-oriented? By analyzing and comparing the data, it will be possible to see patterns in the reporting of these two conflicts and discuss whether these are possible explanations for any potential contrasts.

Galtung and Ruge produced these news selection criteria with the intention to criticize Western foreign reporting practices.⁷⁰ They proposed that instead of focusing only on the negative, dramatic and unexpected events such as violence and war, Western journalists should give a more holistic, long-term account of the situation, highlighting the context, explaining the processes that led to these events in the first place, and how possible solutions might be reached in the future.⁷¹

The model of *The Structure of Foreign News* has been subjected to academic scrutiny by several media scholars. Stig Hjarvard has pointed to the weaknesses in empirical reliability, and that the model is an insufficient tool in academic research. The basis for this criticism stems from studies that had inconclusive results when trying to replicate Galtung and Ruge's factors.⁷² According to Hjarvard, the model is too narrow and journalist-centric, not taking into account other powerful drivers behind news production, such as economics, market forces, the influence of powerful sources, resources and ownership, and audience demands. However, there is an acknowledgement that the news values may be useful in explaining *how* the story have been reported, if not necessarily why it became newsworthy.⁷³

3.2 Norway in a globalized world and the role of Norwegian journalism

Over the course of the 20th century, Norway gradually cultivated an identity as a peacebuilding and peace-promoting nation. This can be tracked all the way back to the Russian Revolution in 1917, during which a Norwegian named Fridtjof Nansen worked to open up supply lines from the Western states into Russia during a famine that affected millions of its citizens. He also negotiated the release of hundreds of thousands of war

⁷⁰ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 59.

⁷¹ Galtung and Ruge, «The Structure of Foreign News», 84-85.

⁷² Hjarvard, «The study of news production», 87-105.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

prisoners to go back home, and in 1922 helped the Red Cross to organize relief efforts for the Russian population after the civil unrest. Nansen ultimately received the Nobel Peace Prize for his work.⁷⁴

Nansen's efforts in many ways introduced an idealism regarding Norway's role as a small, yet influential power in world politics and peace movements. However, this idealism was tempered by Norway's diplomatic alliances and obligations to follow the interests of the NATO coalition post World War II. In addition, the country's own economic interests would take precedent in situations where they could conflict with the interests of other nations. Sharing a border with the Soviet Union during the Cold War put an additional strain on Norway's decision making in a global context.⁷⁵

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the process of globalization intensified. In an official Parliamentary statement, the sitting Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thorvald Stoltenberg declared that Norway would use its resources and competence to become a "bridge builder" in a global context; promoting democracy, human rights, environmental and ecological balance, women's rights, among others.⁷⁶ Norway played a major role in negotiating between Israel and Palestine at the 1993 Oslo Accords, which the Norwegian press championed as a giant leap in terms of Norway's diplomatic stature. Another example of Norway's efforts in peacebuilding came when the 2002 Sri Lankan armistice was negotiated, providing the country a much-needed respite from the conflict.⁷⁷ It became clear that Norway increasingly looked to boost its reputation as a champion of human rights.

During the 1980's and 1990's foreign affairs started gaining more of the political and journalistic agenda, with more resources being devoted to foreign aid.⁷⁸ The collective self-image as a peacebuilding nation coupled with the increase in foreign aid budgets allowed Norwegians to travel abroad on aid missions to developing countries. In previous years,

⁷⁴ Krøvel, «Norge skaper seg en plass i verden», 55-74.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Slaatta, «Journalistikkens makt i den globale tidsalder», 136-166.

Norway provided some foreign aid in the form of Christian missionary work but at a lower scale than what was the case from the 1980's and onward.⁷⁹

For journalists, foreign reporting naturally became a higher priority on the agenda, especially after 1990. On one level, when the government increased its expenditure in foreign aid, it opened up new avenues for journalists to explore, namely because Norway became a stakeholder in other parts of the world. On a second level, Norwegian aid workers in other countries became a source of information and news. If Norwegian aid workers were staying in active conflict zones, it was especially important for journalists to cover the situation. This goes back to Galtung and Ruge's point about resonance in news selection, and the meaningfulness of the message in terms of the audience's cultural proximity to the conflict.

When it comes to foreign conflict reporting in the past, particularly during the Cold War era, Elisabeth Eide and Anne Hege Simonsen provide some data and analysis of Norwegian coverage of world events spanning from the 1900's up until the early 2000's. I would like to focus on the tendencies that they highlight surrounding the Vietnam War between 1967-1975. This conflict received a lot of attention for several reasons, one of them being the political context around it, with the United States waging war against a nation because of ideology. In 1967, there was more coverage of news from the Asian continent than in any other selected year in Eide and Simonsen's study. Only Middle Eastern coverage in 1991, the year when the second Gulf War broke out, was somewhat close to the reporting of stories from Asia.⁸⁰ This peak in coverage coincided with the Cultural Revolution in China, with the authors commenting that there is at least an indication that struggle and conflict attract journalistic attention.⁸¹ In the 1967 sample of the Asian coverage, there were 277 articles that fell under the topic categories of "war" and "conflict" out of a total 550, with the category "politics" being the third largest category with 110 articles.⁸²⁸³

⁷⁹ Eide, ««Slik lever de» – i reportasjen», 217-255.

⁸⁰ Eide, «En ung nasjon skaper sitt univers», 7-29.

⁸¹ Ibid, 108. Eide, «Det fjerne orienten», 107-149.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ The sampling description of the hundred year project from Eide, «En ung nasjon skaper sitt univers», 7-29: «I perioden har vi valgt ut elleve år og fjorten avisutgaver (to konstruerte uker) av hver avis per år. Utvalget vårt er hentet fra fire riks- og tre regionsaviser. Vi har prøvd å unngå årstall der man med sikkerhet kan vente et ensidig fokus på bestemte verdensbegivenheter som berører det politiske Norge spesielt, deriblant andre verdenskrig og Oslo-avtalen mellom Israel og Palestina.»

A deeper analysis of the Norwegian Vietnam War coverage suggests that it was heavily influenced by Norway's political loyalty towards the United States. The extent of the loyalty was, however, fragmented between the different newspapers, because the press was still influenced by political party allegiances. Rune Ottosen writes that the official United States line in the beginning phase of the war was uncritically reported by NRK, although the state channel later became more critical of the warfare.⁸⁴

The split in political ideology among the newspapers can be seen in the varying coverage of the war. *Aftenposten* remained a loyal supporter of the United States throughout the entire span of the conflict, while *Dagbladet* were critical all along. NRK and *Arbeiderbladet* followed a trajectory of starting out as supporters of the United States' justifications, to being more critical and reflecting the anti-war sentiment. According to Ottosen, the shift in media coverage was reflective of a changing political climate in Norway. The Labor Party, who were the dominant political entity throughout the majority of the conflict, had publicly declared their support for Northern Vietnam, which in turn influenced the sentiment in some of the news outlets.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the Vietnam War ushered in a debate about the role of the Norwegian media during times of conflict for the first time, especially the ability to question the conduct of a political ally and a global superpower like the United States. Increasingly, some journalists made an effort to balance out the coverage by providing an outlet for the Northern Vietnamese point of view, and by showing propaganda films from both the US and Northern Vietnamese side.⁸⁶

One of the aims of this study is to explore Norwegian media coverage of distant conflicts in the post-Cold War era, a period when Norway expanded its involvement in foreign affairs significantly. Roy Krøvel writes that foreign aid expenditure grew to one per cent of Norway's gross domestic Product (GDP) at the end of the 20th century, and in 2009 amounted to 22.8 billion NOK of the state budget⁸⁷. In 2017, the foreign aid budget was at a whopping 33.8 billion NOK⁸⁸.

⁸⁴ Ottosen, «Journalistikkens konfliktfylte lojalitet», 197-227.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Krøvel, «Norge skaper seg en plass i verden», 55-74.

⁸⁸ Regjeringen, «Bistandsbudsjettet øker med 1,3 milliarder kroner i 2018».

The Rwandan genocide occurred during the rapid expansion of Norwegian involvement overseas. This is a very important element in this thesis, because a lot of the analysis will focus on news selection and agenda-setting in the Norwegian daily press. Did the increase in the budgets and human involvement for promoting peace and human rights correlate with more press coverage between 1994 and 2017? And what about the extent of the reporting? Research suggests that budget constraints and the advances in communication technology (such as Internet and satellite technology) have shrunk the pool of stationed foreign correspondents among Norwegian news agencies⁸⁹. On one hand, it is understandable that in a new era of media economics, it is increasingly difficult to allocate resources for the deployment of foreign correspondents in different conflict zones, especially when Internet and phone communication has connected the world. On the other hand, media scholars have argued that the absence of professional journalists in crisis environments tends to lead to more superficial and less-nuanced coverage of distant crises.^{90 91}

By focusing on the cases of Rwanda and Myanmar, I will hopefully be able to see some tendencies in the reporting. For example, is the foreign conflict reporting more or less superficial in 2017 than it was in 1994? This can be quantified by looking at the amount of original reporting, i.e. long-form pieces (such as features) that are written by in-house journalists or foreign correspondents. In addition, the data on the sources that were used, and the story focus could provide a more holistic picture about how these conflicts were covered. By analyzing these data utilizing news-selection theories and the accounts about Norway's political involvement in the global sphere, I hope to add an extra dimension to the research in terms of providing a deeper context than simply describing and commenting on the quantitative findings.

3.3 New wars and the influence of sources on conflict reporting

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the landscape of Western war and conflict journalism changed as there was no longer a real threat of either total, limited war or nuclear threat to Western democracies. To elaborate in very simple and short terms, the prospect of war between the democratic states of the global North was as unrealistic as ever, and the end

⁸⁹ Slaatta, «Journalistikkens makt i den globale tidsalder», 136-166.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Cottle: «Journalism and Globalization», 341-357.

of the Cold War marked an end to the tense anticipation of an impending nuclear war between the two superpowers. In addition, the involvement in ideologically driven wars and conflicts such as the war in Vietnam were no longer on the agenda.⁹²

In lieu of these kinds of wars (“our wars”), different types of conflicts thus began to gather the attention of the Western media. The wars in the former Yugoslavia are examples of localized conflicts that were triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without a direct connection to Western powers, the involvements from these states in these wars was minimal. During this era, possibly only the Gulf War of 1990-1991 could be seen as a conflict with elements that resembled the type of involvement from a Western coalition that was common previously.⁹³

After the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, the president of the United States, George W. Bush, declared a “war on terror”, which subsequently led to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.⁹⁴ This heralded a new era of modern Western warfare, geopolitical instability in the Middle East, and the media coverage of these wars and terrorism as a whole. Simon Cottle writes: “The US war on terror, as well as its asymmetric enemies, therefore, has positioned ‘terror’ at the centre of the new world (dis)order and high on global news agendas.”⁹⁵ Not only did the asymmetrical wars take up a lot of space in Western news, the perceived risk of other terrorist attacks in Western countries also attracted a lot of attention. In this paradigm, distant wars such as the Afghanistan and Iraqi invasions received extensive news coverage due to the involvement of the militaries of the United States and the NATO coalition. As previously established, news about foreign conflicts where Western nations are involved become a matter of automatic public interest. At a time when Western media are pre-occupied with news revolving the “war on terror”, it would be natural to contemplate whether other, more distant conflicts without such Western presence (like the Rohingya crisis), would have a more difficult time to get attention in Western news media.

When referring to “distant conflicts”, scholars do not mean the geographical distance to the conflicts, although it certainly plays a part. Susan Carruthers explains:

⁹² Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 197-198.

⁹³ Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1996), 3.

⁹⁴ Cottle, *Mediatized Conflict* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006), 143.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 144.

“For many comfortable Northerners or Westerners, then, genocide in Rwanda, ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Bosnia and Kosovo, the implosion of Somalia and other manifestations of post-Cold War disorder are essentially ‘other people’s wars’. They become ‘our wars’ only if our states – or the international organisations to which they cede some of their sovereignty – actively choose to entangle themselves therein.”⁹⁶

Traditionally speaking, war and conflict journalism has followed a dichotomous way to report on these issues, namely by focusing on “our side” and “the opposition”, be it in the reporting of the fight against Communism or the War on Terror.⁹⁷⁹⁸ Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky discussed this in their influential book *Manufacturing Consent*, and although not all of the aspects of their propaganda model are relevant for this thesis, one is particularly useful. The third filter in their model, sourcing of mass-media news, discusses journalism and mass-media’s dependency on official sources. In this model, they set up the premise that the main functions of Western media is to inform and entertain people, while earning money through selling their product (for example newspapers) and advertising space. In order to obtain their product, which is information that can be sold as “news”, they have to rely on sources. The main crux of the Herman and Chomsky’s argument is that news outlets exhibit a heavy over-reliance on official sources.¹⁰⁰

The reason for this over-reliance is that it is very convenient. Firstly, no news outlet has the resources to have an unlimited number of sources and journalists reporting on all kinds of topics from all corners of the world, so getting the information directly from a government official or any other organization is an efficient way to gather news. Secondly, official sources have traditionally been seen as credible sources of information. And because news outlets depend on having a credible reputation among the public, who fund their business by buying and reading their product, they would be more inclined to keep up a good relationship with the official sources who grant them access to credible information. This can result in a situation where journalists may become less critical of the information that they receive from for example government officials, because of the fear of spoiling the relationship and thus losing their access privileges. Herman and Chomsky summarize this point quite eloquently when they write: “It is very difficult to call authorities on whom one

⁹⁶ Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 198.

⁹⁷ Cottle, *Global Crisis Reporting* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2009), 123-125.

⁹⁸ Carruthers, *The Media at War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2000), 204-205.

⁹⁹ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, (London: Bodley Head, 2008), 29-33.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 21-22.

depends for daily news liars, even if they tell whoppers.”¹⁰¹ Research on the media’s role during the Rwandan genocide has pointed to the failing in properly questioning and examining the narrative put forth by official sources, in particular Western political leaders, about the reality of the genocide, which impeded the intervention process.

One thing worth considering about the relationship between NGO workers and journalists, is the fact that these two parties oftentimes get drawn to each other by the virtue of sharing common interests – in promoting the cause for the NGO worker, and in getting reporting material for the journalist. Additionally, practical necessities such as being able to make use of the resources of the NGO workers to travel around a conflict zone, get pertinent information and getting in touch with relevant people play a part in manifesting a strong reliance on NGOs for the journalist. Peter Shiras writes that this might not always be beneficial in terms of portraying an accurate account of the conflict at hand, because of the fact that the most sure and proven way to get publicity is to focus on the dramatic and sensational aspects of a conflict situation. However, Shiras also acknowledges that media publicity is nevertheless the most effective way to spread awareness that might be essential to creating an international relief effort and response to a conflict.¹⁰²

On one hand, it can be argued that without official sources, it is difficult to put distant conflicts on the news agenda of a Western country, in this case Norway. In this context, the official sources are institutions with the required resources to acquire relevant information about the conflicts, for example the United Nations or Western governments that have diplomats and other officials that can produce factual information. In order to turn a conflict such as the Rwandan genocide or the Rohingya crisis into a news item in a country like Norway, journalists have to work together with the established forces that drive the flow of information. On the other hand, one of the pillars of Western journalism is to strive towards critical and considered reporting, which means carefully questioning the legitimacy of every source and to ideally put forth a multitude of voices into the public sphere. In practice, this means that journalists are obliged to question and interpret the agendas of the sources, their legitimacy and whether their actions are matching what is being relayed in the media.

¹⁰¹ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, (London: Bodley Head, 2008), 21.

¹⁰² Shiras, «Big Problems, Small Print», 93-114.

I hope that highlighting the distribution of the sources that were used in the cases of Rwanda and Myanmar will lead to a discussion about the importance of the sources in regard to news selection, the diversity of voices in the news, and whether there have been any changes between 1994 and 2017.

Sigurd Allern brings up an interesting point about the diversity of sources. He writes that the number of sources used in an article is generally a good barometer of the quality of said article. There are exceptions to this, as there are examples of articles that use only one formal source but provide a quality account of the subject matter because of the competency of both the informant and the journalist. Conversely, one can find articles that refer to a number of sources, but only provide a very superficial account of a news story.¹⁰³ Allern goes on to state that articles that use only one source tend to be superficial news items that serve as simple, informative news filler (e.g. notices). In other words, articles that use two or more sources, generally tend to be more investigative by their very nature – again accounting for the exceptions to the rule. Finally, he points out, that journalists who write articles without citing a single source are essentially breaking a fundamental rule in Norwegian journalism¹⁰⁴, outlined in The Ethical Code of Practice for the Norwegian Press paragraph 3.1: “The source of information must, as a rule, be identified, unless this conflicts with source protection or consideration for a third party”.¹⁰⁵

3.4 The visual aspect of conflict reporting

According to media scholars Bernt Eide and Rune Ottosen, the use of imagery in journalism has not been explored as deeply as other aspects of reporting, and remains an understudied field, despite being a very prominent feature of journalism.¹⁰⁶ What is known, however, is that the gatekeepers who have the final say over which images will be published, are far away from the reporting, but much closer to the local political and financial agenda. This means that they are more likely to choose the photos that will resonate in the best way with the realities of newspaper economics and what the editors think the public wants, or expects, to see.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸ In addition, the parties that are directly involved in a conflict will be

¹⁰³ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 162-163.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Pressens Faglige Utvalg, «Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press».

¹⁰⁶ Eide and Ottosen, «Verdensbilder», 93-104.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

doing their best to influence what kind of images make their way to the gatekeepers, in order to have more control over the narrative.¹⁰⁹

Stories that are accompanied by photographs or images will attract more attention from the audience, while the stories without any images at all will struggle to get any attention from the readers.¹¹⁰ Visuals simply have tend to dominate over other forms of communication due to the fact that it is one of our most important and potent perceptive senses.¹¹¹ The presence of a visual component will only enhance our overall perception of a situation. It has also been demonstrated that images stick better in our memory than text or verbal communication, and that we organize our memories more effectively using visual cues. In addition, still images and photographs are more memorable than moving pictures. Eide and Ottosen bring up the example of the iconic image of the girl running from napalm during the Vietnam War as one of the photographs that has been burned into people's collective memory of that war.¹¹²

The analysis will pay attention to how many articles are accompanied by images, ranging from none to three or more images – in order to ascertain how much focus and attention these stories will get. On a second level, the focus or themes of the images will be analyzed to find out how the conflicts were represented. I am primarily seeking to find out if there is an overwhelming use of photographs that can be categorized as “evocative” or “photographs or visuals of military objects and/or scenarios”, because these echo a typical pattern of conflict reporting that is very much in accordance with the news values of foreign conflict reporting.¹¹³ The analysis of the use of images in the articles will serve as an extension of framing practices as laid out previously in this chapter. Does the image use in the reporting of the Rwandan genocide and the Myanmar crisis reinforce or deviate from the standard assumptions of how foreign conflicts are covered in Western press? More specifically, are the images heavily focused on violence and suffering? And how does the coverage of the two conflicts compare in regard to this aspect?

¹⁰⁸ This is again connected to the aforementioned news values and what the editorial desk deems to be palatable or expected from the eyes of the news consumers.

¹⁰⁹ Eide and Ottosen, «Verdensbilder», 93-104.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ As I wrote about previously in this chapter: news focusing on the negative, the dramatic and suffering are more likely to be selected when it comes to foreign conflict news items.

3.5 Contemporary print journalism

Print newspapers may at this point in time be considered to be old world technology. There have certainly been major changes in the realm of news media since the early-1990s, the advent of online journalism being the most landscape-altering. The form and the role of the analogue newspaper is vastly different than in 2017 (at the time of the Myanmar crisis) than what it used to be in 1994. Despite the fall in circulation figures, some scholars have an optimistic view about the future of print journalism, arguing that newspapers always had to adapt to new technologies such as radio and television, and the same is true with the Internet.¹¹⁴ For example, the process of tabloidization has been discussed in regard to the modernization of the newspaper. The key elements of this process are connected to the design and the content. The layout is tidied up and simplified. The headlines become more prominent and concise, making the whole product more reader-friendly and visually appealing. Images gain prominence to capture the reader's attention and provide a holistic understanding of the agenda. Whereas in previous decades, newspaper articles were not always sorted by theme or importance, the modern versions provide a much more cohesive and effective experience.¹¹⁵

On the continuing relevance of the print newspaper, Peter Cole and Tony Harcup write that even in transitional times, print journalism has been at the forefront of challenging mismanagement and impropriety in the political sphere.¹¹⁶ In addition, despite the fact that some newspapers have ditched the formidable broadsheet format in favor of a more compact and modern look, there is, on average, the same amount of material in the newspapers, or in some cases even more.¹¹⁷ "It [the newspaper] offers a range of content in one package, as opposed to requiring the consumer to go to different places for different things, as on the internet."¹¹⁸ However, has the increased tabloidization had any impact on the reporting of distant conflicts in 2017? Could it be argued that the coverage of the Myanmar crisis was less nuanced and superficial than that of the Rwandan genocide as a result?

¹¹⁴ Cole and Harcup, *Newspaper Journalism* (London: Sage, 2010), 7.

¹¹⁵ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 30-31.

¹¹⁶ Cole and Harcup, *Newspaper Journalism* (London: Sage, 2010), 13.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 14.

3.6 A case study of the evolution of Norwegian reporting of distant conflicts

We live in a time when information has never been easier to access and where the world has never been so connected. The Cold War de-escalated 30 years ago, and new types of conflicts around the globe have attracted Western media's attention. During the last 20 years, the threat of terrorism to Western nations has been the dominant paradigm in conflict reporting. At the same time, citizens of countries like Norway have been able to enjoy the freedoms that comes with living in a peaceful democratic state. This privileged position allowed the Norwegian government to get involved in promoting democratic values and focusing on humanitarian projects overseas. As the public watchdog, the press has a responsibility to highlight human rights abuses in order to spread awareness of the plight of people in dire situations with the intention to mobilize movements of support and aid. One of the aims of this thesis is to find out how the Norwegian press cover distant conflicts in 2017 and whether or not there have been any developments in this field since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. This chapter has reviewed different aspects of conflict reporting, from standard news values, the agenda-setting function of the media and the role of framing in contextualizing faraway conflicts to Norwegian audiences. Print journalism can still play an important role in setting the agenda and shed light on human rights abuses overseas. The process of moving towards a more peaceful world involves informing the public so that steps can be made to find solutions and help those who are marginalized and abused.

4 Methodology

This chapter will present the methodological approach of this thesis. I will elaborate on the choice and purpose of using a quantitative content analysis, the decision to study the newspaper medium and explain the reasoning for selecting Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang as a representation of the Norwegian press. In addition, I will review the sampling process, how and where the data was gathered, as well as operationalize all of the variables that are in the codebook.

4.1 Choosing the method

The purpose of this research project is to analyze and compare the journalistic coverage of two conflicts that took place a little over two decades apart. The most fitting research method for this type of study is quantitative content analysis, because it allows the researcher to collect and measure sets of numerical data and analyze it within the theoretical context of the project.¹¹⁹ Content analysis has been defined as “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantifiable manner for the purpose of measuring variables.”¹²⁰ In order to achieve this, the researcher must establish clear rules about how to collect and code the material. Each unit of measurement and all variables must be defined as clearly as possible, so as to eliminate the possibility of the coder’s biases and personal interpretations to influence the data collection.¹²¹¹²² The objectivity of content analysis refers to the idea that, once clear rules for the coding procedure are established, the research may be replicated by other researchers.¹²³ The applicable purposes of content analysis that relate to this project, as defined by Wimmer & Dominick¹²⁴, are:

1. “Describing patterns of trends in media portrayals.”¹²⁵
2. “Testing hypotheses about the policies or aims of media producers.”¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ Gunter, «The qualitative research process», 237-264.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Østbye, et al., *Metodebok for mediefag* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget), 208.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Wimmer and Dominick, *Mass media research* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1994).

¹²⁵ Gunter, «The qualitative research process», 237-264.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

To put it in practical term for this project, the aim is to collect numerical data that will examine the patterns of the newspaper coverage of the 1994 Rwanda genocide and the 2017 crisis in Myanmar. The datasets have been coded in such a way that they will answer specific research questions regarding the quantitative extent of the coverage, the use of sources and the framing of the two conflicts. Sigurd Allern estimates that content analysis can legitimately be used to capture qualitative aspects of the subject matter that is being studied.¹²⁷ In other words, the quantitative data on its own bears little scientific significance if it is not properly applied to answer the research questions.¹²⁸ Therefore, it also has to be looked at through an established theoretical framework.

The benefits of content analysis within the context of this project is that it will allow me to study and compare the patterns in news coverage of the two conflicts. Looking at the variables such as “genre”, “story author”, “column space”, the number of images and whether the story appeared on the front page will shed a light on how much importance the newspapers placed on each of these stories. Furthermore, analyzing the use of sources and the variety thereof, will hopefully illuminate how thoroughly the conflicts have been portrayed. In addition, the analysis of the subject matter in the articles (i.e. “story focus” and “image focus”) is intended to ascertain the framing of these two conflicts. The purpose of this is to find out what type of stories have been selected in the process of covering Rwanda and Myanmar. The theories about news-selection and agenda-setting will inform the analysis and allow for more qualitative deliberations about the coverage. The main points of discussion will focus on whether the coverage is strongly focused on violence and human suffering, Norwegian and Western involvement, and how the conflicts have been covered in terms of space and the depth of reporting. The second level of analysis is to compare and contrast the coverage of the two conflicts in order to examine how the Norwegian media coverage of distant conflicts has evolved between 1994 and 2017.

4.2 The newspapers

This thesis will study the following daily Norwegian newspapers: *Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen* and *Verdens Gang*. The selection of this specific medium was firstly determined by my personal interest and preference for analogue newspapers, and secondly by

¹²⁷ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 77.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

the fact that the material is easily accessible through the digitized archives of ATEKST Retriever and the National Library of Norway (Nasjonalbiblioteket). Additionally, newspaper articles make for very suitable units of measurement in a quantitative content analysis. I was able to define concrete variables for the codebook after conducting a pilot study. By looking through articles about the two conflicts, I identified a number of relevant variables: the publishing date, front page occurrence, the author, the article genre, column space, the use of sources, the story focus, how many images accompanied each story, and the focus of the images. Later in this chapter, each variable will be operationalized so that the data collection and coding is as transparent as possible.

The decision to analyze printed newspaper instead of online newspapers was also influenced by the fact that online news was not yet a fully developed concept in Norway in 1994, which was the year when the genocide in Rwanda occurred. Of course, since the mid-1990's news consumption habits have changed drastically, and the role of analogue newspapers has diminished significantly, as demonstrated in figure 4.1:

Opplagstall for norske aviser 1994 - 2017 (papiropplag)

Avis	1994	2017	
Dagbladet	228 834	39 362	
Klassekampen	9 822	23 559	
VG	386 137	78 289	

Figure 4.1: Circulation figures for printed copies of these newspapers in 1994 versus 2017.¹²⁹

The readership of analogue newspapers has gradually decreased as news consumption habits shifted towards digital newspapers. This has mostly impacted the sales of the largest newspapers, in this context Dagbladet and Verdens Gang. Klassekampen, on the other hand, has seen a significant uptick in readership of their physical copies from 1994 to 2017.

I briefly considered conducting a mixed-medium analysis, meaning collecting data about Rwanda from analogue newspapers, and for Myanmar from online equivalents.

¹²⁹ Medienorge, «Opplagstall norske aviser».

However, I ultimately decided against this, because I believe studying the same type of medium for both of the conflicts will result in a more cohesive and comprehensive analysis. Analyzing online content is seen as more problematic due to the fact that they can be subjected to post-publishing edits, making the measurement of units and variables more unpredictable.¹³⁰ Therefore, keeping with printed newspapers in both conflict cases will maintain an equivalence and clarity for the entire research process.

Lesertall for norske papiraviser 2017 (antall i 1000)

Avis	2017	
Dagbladet	170	
Klassekampen	97	
VG	300	

Figure 4.2: 2017 readership figures for Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang.¹³¹

Figure 4.2 presents the daily average readership statistics for Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang in 2017. The breakdown of the daily readership of these Norwegian dailies is 170,000 for Dagbladet, 97,000 for Klassekampen and 300,000 for VG, which are fairly substantial figures. Even if the readership of analogue newspapers has dropped since the mid-1990's, there is a significant number of people still reading daily newspapers. This indicates that the newspaper remains an important medium for news consumption in Norway, and one that is worth studying.

Furthermore, contemporary media research suggests that print newspapers are more immersive and are read more thoroughly than online news. In 2015, Torbjörn von Krogh and Ulrika Andersson conducted a readership study, comparing the reading patterns of people reading a Swedish local newspaper *VLT*, and those who read the same newspaper online (*vlt.se*). The authors found that online readers mostly focused on stories on the first page of the news site and were drawn to sensationalist material such as accidents and crimes, whereas print readers had more diverse reading patterns. Von Krogh and Andersson write that the

¹³⁰ Østbye, et al., *Metodebok for mediefag* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget), 212.

¹³¹ Medienorge, «Lesertall for norske aviser».

findings indicate print and online newspapers serve different purposes for the readers: “Clearly, the printed paper is used both for updates and immersion, while the online paper is used for updates on ongoing events and incidents.”¹³²

The findings of von Krogh & Andersson’s study echo an older research paper by Eli Skogerbø & Marte Winswold, which compared news consumption of local print and online newspaper readers in Norway. In this 2011 article, the researchers found that readers of print newspapers consumed all of the different categories aside from sports at higher rates and read the content more thoroughly than online users.¹³³ These studies and the readership figures show that printed newspapers are still an important source of information in today’s society, which is why I believe it is a medium that is worth studying.

Finally, I would like to address each of the newspapers that were researched in this project and explain the thought processes behind their selection:

Verdens Gang (VG) is Norway’s largest daily newspaper that practices tabloid journalism. The newspaper aims to appeal to every reader demographic, since it defines itself as politically unattached and economically independent.¹³⁴ Even though VG focuses heavily on scandals, sport and entertainment, it also has a reputation for making room for more serious content. Therefore, it can be placed in the upper echelon of the “daily tabloid” category¹³⁵. An earlier version of Verdens Gang was established in a broadsheet format in 1945 as a serious morning newspaper with a focus on hard news and cultural developments. After experiencing low turnover, the newspaper gradually changed its profile to become more tabloid-oriented in the early 1950’s.¹³⁶ As the largest Norwegian newspaper in Norway, VG is one of the most significant news outlets and plays a central role in setting the journalistic agenda in the country. The main reason for including VG in this study is because it will provide a substantial amount of data that reflects the level of national journalistic discourse in Norway.

¹³² Von Krogh and Andersson, «Reading Patterns in Print and Online Newspapers», 1069.

¹³³ Skogerbø and Winswold, «Audiences on the move».

¹³⁴ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 72.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 41.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

As in the case with VG, Dagbladet was selected for its size, reach and readership. Per 2011, the paper version of Dagbladet had 370,000 readers, and was the fourth largest newspaper in the country.¹³⁷ It is commercially oriented and has a tabloid format. Recently, the paper shifted its policy towards an increased focus on covering large and important stories very extensively. The way a story becomes important enough to warrant this type of coverage is if it directly affects the audience, or if there is so much public interest that all major news outlets collectively decide to put it on the agenda.¹³⁸ Thus, Dagbladet is another significant driving force in setting and amplifying the journalistic agenda in Norway.

Klassekampen is a daily independent radical newspaper with a nationwide reach.¹³⁹ Sigurd Allern, who has previously served as an editor of Klassekampen¹⁴⁰, describes it as a socialist newspaper, that “are more all-round than the business papers and address mainly politically and ideologically aware readers who feel a need for a complement to the local press.”¹⁴¹ During the data collection process, it came to my attention that Klassekampen had a broadsheet format in 1994, but had switched to tabloid sometime in the intervening years. Sigurd Allern explains that the press underwent a process of “tabloidization” that does not necessarily imply a complete overhaul of the type of content that a newspaper puts out. Instead, it has to do with adjusting the format and style to keep up with the modern requirements of journalism.¹⁴² The basis for including Klassekampen in the newspaper selection is to provide some balance to the data by adding editorial diversity. Though it might not have the same level of readership as Dagbladet and VG, Klassekampen provides a different style of journalism that is intended for a more specific target audience, all the while having a large enough reach to draw a sizeable sample.

4.3 The sample

The sampling process was guided by the comparative nature of this thesis. Articles about the two conflicts were collected over a period of five to six months in order to have a solid base for the analysis. The aim was to find a sampling interval that stretched over a

¹³⁷ Olsen, «Lybia på topp of pupp under», 69-106.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Pettersen, «Klassekampen».

¹⁴⁰ Skurdahl, «Klassekampens historie er full av kamper, men de viktigste står foran oss».

¹⁴¹ Allern, «Journalistic and commercial news values», 143.

¹⁴² Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 39.

similar period of time for both of the conflicts, and the selection was determined by the activity of the coverage in the three newspapers. Sigurd Allern writes that if the purpose of the research is to examine the collective press coverage of an event, the sample has to be drawn from the period the event was actively covered.¹⁴³ In the case of the Rwandan genocide, the coverage intensified when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down in April, and lasted throughout the year of 1994. The sample period was cut-off at the end of August 1994, because the coverage had passed its peak. 240 articles were collected from the three newspapers, which I deemed to be a fairly comprehensive sample.

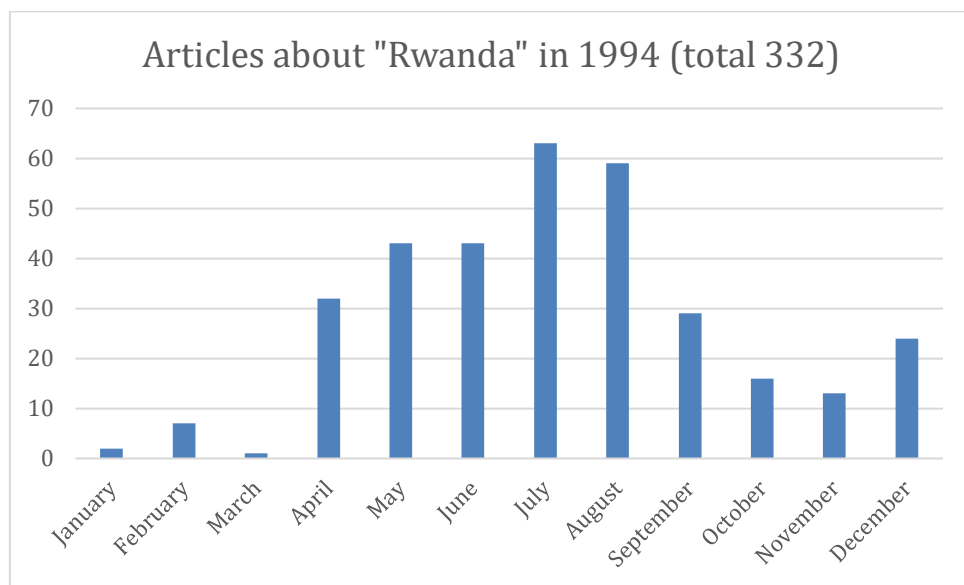


Figure 4.3: Total article distribution in Dagbladet, Klassekampen and VG for every month in 1994. From: Nasjonalbiblioteket

As can be seen in figure 4.3, the coverage reached its peak in July 1994, and suffered a considerable drop in the month of September. The article distribution in the three newspapers was as follows: 85 articles in Dagbladet, 82 in Klassekampen and 73 in VG.

¹⁴³ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 78.

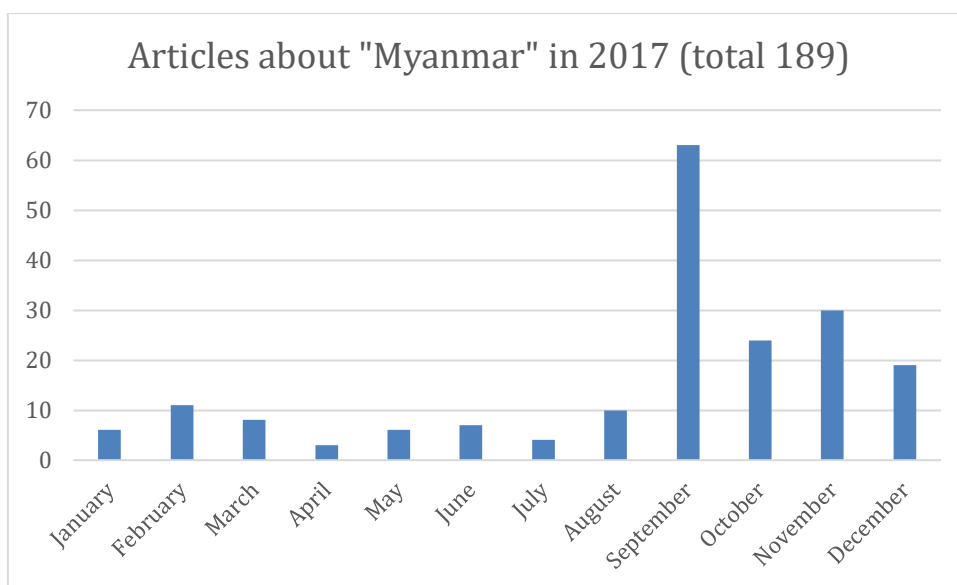


Figure 4.4: Total article distribution in Dagbladet, Klassekampen and VG for every month in 2017. From: ATEKST Retriever

Figure 4.4 shows the monthly distribution of articles about Myanmar in Dagbladet, Klassekampen and VG throughout 2017. Even though the Rohingya crisis began to escalate during the month of August, the coverage in the three Norwegian newspapers did not fully take off until September. In their profile of Myanmar, the BBC wrote that there were concerns about human rights abuses carried out by the Myanmar army against the Rohingya minority in March 2017.¹⁴⁴ The next entry in this timeline is from August 2017 and it states that “Rohingya militants attack police posts in Rakhine. The response by security forces prompts an exodus of Rohingya and allegations that their actions amount to ethnic cleansing.”¹⁴⁵

After conducting a search using the keyword “Myanmar” in ATEKST Retriever and Nasjonalbiblioteket, I found that there were only two articles covering the crisis published at the end of August. Despite the meagre findings, I decided to start the sample period in August 2017, and extend it to the end of January 2018. This yielded a total of 127 articles about Myanmar; 17 in Dagbladet, 48 in Klassekampen and 62 in VG.

The discrepancy in the sample size of the two conflicts proved to be considerable. However, I decided that it would have to suffice, given the fact that I was aiming to have a corresponding timeframe for data collection in both of the cases. Both of the sampling

¹⁴⁴ BBC News, «Myanmar profile - Timeline».

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

periods reflect the escalation phase of the two conflicts. Even though no conflict is exactly the same in nature, these had a similar trajectory in terms of the coverage they received. In other words, the cut-off for the data collection did not happen in the middle of a huge surge of news articles in either case. In fact, the coverage began to tail off towards the end, with more and larger gaps (days) between the articles. The main consideration regarding the sample size was to gather a large enough sample to get a representative picture of the relevant features in the journalistic coverage, while also taking into account the time it would take to collect and code all the data. I concluded that 367 articles would be a sufficient amount of data for the purpose of this particular project.

4.4 Search engines and overcoming obstacles

The newspapers that were chosen for this research project have been digitized and kept in public-access archives going back several decades, although it is somewhat unclear exactly how complete these archives are. I used primarily the newspaper archives of Nasjonalbiblioteket (The National Library of Norway), but had to rely on ATEKST Retriever to fill in certain gaps. It proved challenging to figure out which particular articles were missing in the Nasjonalbiblioteket archive. I decided early on to only utilize the search words “Rwanda” and “Myanmar” in my search for articles on the two conflicts and then sort them manually in the process of coding. Articles about these two countries that were completely irrelevant to the conflict coverage were therefore excluded. For example, a small number of travel advertisements about Myanmar in August 2017 were removed from the data.

After conducting a preliminary search for the search word “Myanmar” in the period of 01.08.2017 – 01.01.2018 in the two search engines, it transpired that the results differed vastly in quantity. Within the same search parameters, Retriever found 155 articles, while Nasjonalbiblioteket only found 76. Another issue arose when comparing the searches for “Rwanda” (time frame 01.04.1994 – 01.09.1994) and “Myanmar” (the same time frame as before) in Nasjonalbiblioteket. This resulted in 258 articles for Rwanda, while the Myanmar search yielded only 76. Clearly, this was a fairly significant discrepancy, and one that could potentially have been problematic for a comparative analysis of these conflicts. At the same time, Retriever yielded zero results for “Rwanda” once Verdens Gang was taken out of the equation. After visiting the National Library in person, I discovered that the archives had not

yet digitized the copies of Verdens Gang between August 1st to November 23rd of 2017. In addition, the newspapers of Klassekampen only begin showing up in the results from October 2nd, 2017. The helpful librarians suggested that I fill in these gaps using Retriever, and thankfully, the materials missing from Nasjonalbiblioteket were all present there. This allowed me to proceed with sorting the articles and organizing them in the correct order.

Ultimately, I found Nasjonalbiblioteket to be a very useful tool and a good search engine. Even though there were gaps in the archive, I understand that digitizing physical newspapers is an arduous and continuous process. Ultimately, I am thankful that these digital archives exist, and that the database is searchable. The fact that I could type in the words “Myanmar” and “Rwanda” in my searches and get between roughly 170 and 240 results for the two respective conflicts (across both platforms) made me fairly confident that the probability for errors in the databases was quite low. Thus, this allowed me to trust the search function and not have to go through every copy of the three newspapers in the five-month sample periods manually. The only downside of these search engines was that they were not very user-friendly and at times difficult to navigate. For example, the process of setting-up search parameters has some room for improvement. In the end, the obstacles were minor and fairly easy to overcome.

4.5 Operationalizing the variables

The codebook is designed to gather tangible, numeric data in a simple and organized spreadsheet. In order to achieve this, the right variables must be clearly identified. In this section, I present all of the variables in the codebook, operationalize them, and elaborate on the basis and relevance of their inclusion. This codebook is designed with the help of a pilot study, which helped solidifying the categories and the variables for the ultimate data collection.

Publishing date: Marking the publishing date and month of the collected articles eases the process of organizing the data and provides the dataset a chronological order. This also allows for creating a timeline of the publishing activity in order to see the peaks and valleys of the coverage.

Front page: This is a binary variable that captures whether or not the article appears on the front page of the newspaper. The assessment of front-page occurrences is relevant for measuring the level of prioritization of the conflicts in the news agenda.

Newspaper: This variable assigns the articles to one of the newspapers in this study: (1) “Dagbladet”, (2) “Klassekampen” or (3) “Verdens Gang”. It shows the article distribution and allows for crosstabulation with other variables.

Author: The pilot study helped determine the six following article authors: (1) “no author”, (2) “journalist”, (3) “foreign correspondent”, (4) “politician”, (5) “non-journalist” and (6) “news agency”. This variable relates to the importance of the story on the newspaper’s agenda. For example, articles authored by journalists and foreign correspondents require more time and resources to produce than publishing an article from a news agency. Some articles are left uncredited and are therefore labelled with the category “no author”. There are also instances of non-journalists (for example NGO workers) and politicians writing articles about the conflicts. This suggests that the newspapers are willing to give a platform to people with first-hand experience and those in power who wish to share their opinion. These articles can help draw attention to the conflicts and add more resonance to the readers. The findings will be discussed within the framework of agenda-setting and framing to examine the prioritization of the two conflicts.

Article genre: Journalistic genres follow certain norms in regard to the content, layout of an article, the linguistic style and the storytelling. These norms guide the journalist in the writing of an article and fulfill the expectations of the reader about the type of content that can usually be found in a newspaper.¹⁴⁶ Genres can be difficult to define and label, however they can usually be placed in three main categories of news content: news journalism, feature journalism and commentary.¹⁴⁷ News journalism is the reporting of factual information about an event or a story. Feature journalism is characterized by a more personal and descriptive style than news journalism and has the potential to go more in-depth about the subject matter.¹⁴⁸ Finally, commentary includes articles that express the author’s

¹⁴⁶ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 101-103.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 101.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 102.

thoughts and opinions about a subject, for example editorials and op-eds.¹⁴⁹ It can be difficult to label the articles, and the coder's interpretations can have an impact on the results. Using the aforementioned characteristics, I derived the following genres in the codebook: (1) "news report", (2) "notice", (3) "feature", (4) "op-ed", (5) "editorial" and (6) "other". The distinctive qualities of the genres will to a certain degree reflect the prioritization of the stories. Traditionally, Norwegian conflict coverage has been dominated by the notice, which is a short, informational piece that does not convey much depth or context. According to Elisabeth Eide, conflict reporting that is dominated by this article type is indicative of low priority and a lack of resources.¹⁵⁰ Conversely, the feature allows the journalist to go into depth about a crisis and portray settings, atmosphere and people's experiences with greater nuance.¹⁵¹ However, studies have shown that feature journalism has been slowly deprioritized in the Norwegian press, because the production of this type of article requires more time and resources.¹⁵²

Column space: This variable deals with how much column space was dedicated to each story. The four values dedicated to this variable are: (1) "Up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the page", (2) "up to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the page", (3) "up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the page" and (4) "more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of the page". Measuring the column space will highlight the overall visibility of the stories – the more space a story takes up, the higher the likelihood of it being noticed by the reader. Implicitly, it is another measurement of the prioritization of the conflicts. In addition, this variable can instruct the analysis of the structural changes within the newspaper industry between 1994 and 2017, such as the increased tabloidization of the press.

Sources: The intention is to understand where the information is coming from and what kind of sources the three Norwegian newspapers rely most heavily on. The pilot study identified the main sources that were used in the two conflicts: (1) "Local sources", i.e. any Rwandan or Burmese citizen without an affiliation to the military, the political sphere or any other organization. Then, there were (2) "foreign correspondents", (these stories are usually authored by the foreign correspondent) (3) "local politicians", (actors who are directly connected to local politics in Rwanda or Myanmar) (4) "Norwegian politicians", (5) "international politicians", (6) "NGOs", (7) "the United Nations", and finally, (8) "other"

¹⁴⁹ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 102.

¹⁵⁰ Eide, «Inn i det tredje rom», 9-28.

¹⁵¹ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 113.

¹⁵² Ibid, 116-117.

(sources that do not fit into any of the aforementioned categories) and (9) “none” (meaning the article did not offer any source for the information). Identifying the correct sources requires a thorough examination of each article. The analysis will highlight the distribution of sources and provide some context about how the conflicts were framed. For example, does the coverage rely heavily on information from international politicians compared to NGOs? The sourcing can tell a lot about the news selection practices and the framing of the conflicts.

The focus of the article: Once again the pilot study highlighted the most common themes that the three newspapers focused on. This variable relates to what the coder deems to be the main story or focus in an article. Some of these are not very self-explanatory and will require a bit of context and elaboration. The first category is (1) “violence and/or military action”, and it refers to any mention or report of violence, fighting, clashes or military involvement. Then, there is (2) “human suffering and/or refugee crisis”, which is relevant for articles that focus on the suffering of the surviving victims, and/or when the focus is on the refugee crisis that the conflict creates. (3) “Norwegian involvement” and (4) “European/Western involvement” are appropriate categories for articles focusing on Norwegian and Western involvement within the context of the conflicts. The involvement can relate to private persons, NGO workers, politicians commenting on the matter, foreign troops in the area, or anything else that might connect the conflict to Norwegian or European/Western people, organizations or perspectives. These categories will measure the prevalence of stories that focus on elite people and nations or Norwegian matters in order to frame the conflicts in a more culturally significant way. The categories (5) “local politics” and (6) “international politics” refer to the focus being on local political developments in the former, and the way in which the conflict relates to international politics in the latter. The category (7) “negotiations about possible resolution” is relevant whenever there is focus on peace-negotiations or possible solutions, and (8) “condemnations of the aggressors” can be attributed to articles that directly or indirectly condemning the actors carrying out the violence (citing a source or a third party is included in this definition). The category (9) “genocide”, relates to any explicit mention of these conflicts being genocides, either by using the word “folkemord”¹⁵³, or other synonyms or euphemisms (e.g. “etnisk rensing”¹⁵⁴). Finally, the tenth category (10) “other” is for when the story focus does not match any of the aforementioned categories.

¹⁵³ Translated from Norwegian: “genocide”.

¹⁵⁴ Translated from Norwegian: “ethnic cleansing”.

Image use: This variable keeps track of how many images an article contains with the purpose of collecting data about the prevalence of visuals in the coverage. The four different categories are: (1) none, (2) one, (3) two and (4) three or more. Naturally, articles with the higher number of photos are larger in size, sometimes with photos spread out over two pages.

Image focus: This variable is similar to “story focus”, as both capture certain qualitative aspects of the coverage in the content analysis. The analysis will use these variables to determine how much coverage certain aspects of the conflicts received, and ultimately reveal patterns in the framing of Rwanda and Myanmar. The categories of image focus are as follows: (1) “no image”, (2) “informational visuals”, for images without a narrative, for example maps, charts, graphs, et cetera. (3) “Evocative photographs” are photos that will likely provoke an emotional response from the reader, such as shock, anger, horror or sadness. In many cases these kinds of photographs focus on human suffering or violence. (4) “Neutral photographs of victims” is the category for images portray victims without an explicit focus on suffering. (5) “Neutral/descriptive photographs and visuals” are photos that do not have an emotional narrative and are there to inform or describe, for example landscapes, areas or objects. The final two categories are self-explanatory: (6) “photographs or visuals of military objects/scenarios” and (7) “photographs of politicians” (of any nationality).

4.6 Coding and analysis

The unit of measurement in this study is individual articles dedicated to the respective conflicts. In some cases, larger feature articles were accompanied by smaller pieces such as notices, which were coded as individual entities. All of the articles were manually coded, meaning that I read every piece in the dataset in order to code all of the variables correctly. In most cases, the coding process was well-informed by the classification and operationalization, and it was simple to avoid subjectivity and biases by following the rules set out in this chapter. Overall, the coding took around two weeks to complete. Most of the variables were coded in a mutually exclusive way, meaning that only one of the options could be selected. For example, in determining the author of the story, I could only select one of the

six alternatives listed in the codebook. The only three variables where this was not the case were “sources used”, “story focus” and “image focus” (see codebook in the Appendix). This is because one article could contain more than one source or focus on more than one aspect of the story, for example simultaneously covering human suffering and Western involvement. The same is true for “image focus”, since one article could be accompanied by more than one photograph. Coding these types of variables was not complicated but proved to be slightly challenging to analyze.

The data for each conflict was collected in two separate Excel sheets but later transferred into SPSS for analysis. I mainly used the crosstabs function in SPSS to analyze and present the mutually exclusive variables, coding “newspapers” as the independent variable in order to find its relationship with all the relevant dependent variables in individual tables. The independent variable, also known as the causal variable, is the concept that is believed to have a causal effect or outcome. The dependent variable is the phenomena that one wants to understand or explain.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, there is a presumed causal relationship between the two.¹⁵⁶ The most challenging part of the analysis was gathering and presenting the more complex variables that contained more than one category: story focus, sources and image focus. Because of the way the data was collected, the simplest solution was to manually count all of the occurrences and assign them to each newspaper. After completing rudimentary tables of these data, I converted them into visuals.

4.7 Reliability and validity

Definitional validity refers to how well the theoretical concepts of the research have been established prior to gathering the material. According to Østbye et al. this is a process that begins with the conceptualization of the research, and then continues through operationalization of the specific variables, and ends with the analysis of the collected data.¹⁵⁷ In this chapter, I have gone through every step of this process quite thoroughly, and believe that the research has been conceived and operationalized in a very precise manner. In addition, the codebook provides clear instructions for the coding process.

¹⁵⁵ Gunter, «The qualitative research process», 237-264.

¹⁵⁶ Østbye, et al., *Metodebok for mediefag* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2013), 181.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 27.

Reliability speaks to the precision and the quality of the collection, processing and the analysis of the data.¹⁵⁸ The reliability of a project can be tested by repeating the data collection and the coding process, and producing the same results.¹⁵⁹ To limit human errors influencing the data collection process, the study can be repeated by multiple coders. This is called intercoder reliability.¹⁶⁰ The results can then be measured against each other, creating a reliability coefficient that shows the consistency of the results.¹⁶¹ Unfortunately, I was unable to run an intercoder reliability test due to the size of the sample and time constraints.

¹⁵⁸ Østbye, et al., *Metodebok for mediefag* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2013), 27.

¹⁵⁹ Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2002), 141.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

5 Data and Analysis

5.1 The statistical distribution of the stories

I would like to begin the analysis by presenting the statistical and purely quantitative sets of the collected data: the total number of articles for each conflict and how they were distributed among the three newspapers, by genre, and by author. This will provide a cursory look at the way the newspapers covered the conflicts from a logistical point of view, in regard to resources, effort and focus placed on covering the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 on one hand, and the Myanmar crisis in 2017 on the other. This will provide comparative insights into the agenda-setting practices and prioritization of these two conflicts.

	Rwanda		Myanmar		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Dagbladet	85	35.4 %	17	13.4 %	102
Klassekampen	82	34.2 %	48	37.8 %	130
Verdens Gang	73	30.4 %	62	48.8 %	135
Total	240	100 %	127	100 %	

Figure 5.1: Article distribution of the two conflicts across the three newspapers.

The first and most obvious observation from this table is the considerable discrepancy of the total number of articles between the two conflicts – with the Myanmar dataset amounting to 127 articles, which is a 47% drop from the 240 articles about the Rwandan genocide. The circulation figures for printed newspapers presented in Chapter 4.2 shows a circulation decline of around 77% (from a total of 624 793 in 1994 down to 141 210 in 2017 – for all three newspapers used in my research). These numbers only demonstrate that the sale figures of physical newspapers have decreased drastically in the 23 years between the two conflicts. This reiterates the point about news consumption habits having shifted towards digital media. However, it does not entirely explain why there were so many fewer articles

about the Myanmar crises than there were about the Rwandan genocide. This gradual shift in the news consumption habits that led to the decline of the print newspaper circulation figures, most likely also resulted in a gradual change in the composition of the newspapers and editorial decisions. Another reason for the difference in number of articles could be that the situation in Myanmar was considered to be less newsworthy than the genocide and the subsequent refugee crisis in Rwanda. By presenting and analyzing the remaining sets of data, I hope to find out whether this is a plausible hypothesis.

Another observation from table 5.1 is that Dagbladet went from marginally leading the coverage in number of articles in 1994, with 35.4% of the total article distribution, to having the lowest number of articles about Myanmar in 2017 – 13.4% compared to 37.8% and 48.8% in Klassekampen and Verdens Gang respectively. Meanwhile, Verdens Gang went from having the least number of articles about Rwanda (73 – 30.4%), to leading the coverage for the Myanmar crisis with 62 articles – almost half of the overall number. It has to be noted that in the data collected about the Rwandan genocide, the distribution is fairly even, with all newspapers contributing between 30-35% of the overall coverage. In the Myanmar coverage, it is more dispersed, however, Klassekampen maintained a consistently stable amount of coverage in both of the conflicts (34.2% of the Rwanda articles and 37.8% of the Myanmar articles). This could indicate that Dagbladet and Verdens Gang had gradual changes in their foreign reporting policies over the years, while Klassekampen maintained a fairly stable consistency in this department.

5.2 The composition of the stories, authorship and genre distribution

This section presents and analyzes four components of the collected data: front-page appearance, column space used, story authorship and story genre. The first two carry relevance to the overall visibility of the stories, which has to do with how much attention these stories are likely to receive from the readers. It is also a way to indirectly measure the editorial decisions regarding how much emphasis the newspapers placed on covering these tragic events. The remaining two components contribute to the discussion about how much resources the newspapers put into reporting these conflicts, providing an indication about how these stories were prioritized on the agenda. By resources, I refer to the overall effort that was put into original and investigative reporting of these conflicts. For example, how

many stories were written by the newspaper’s own journalists as opposed to being uncredited or written by a news agency? How many were written by foreign correspondents, whose specific task is to cover issues such as faraway conflicts? Similar reasoning applies to article genres; a notice is the simplest and most effortless way for a newspaper to cover a topic, especially because it is a genre that is often produced by separate news agencies (such as AP or NTB).

There are different degrees of coverage in the various genres. A news report is in most cases a factual and to-the-point breakdown of an event, while feature articles tend to include more background information, detail and narrative. In addition, they are more time-consuming and resource intensive to produce.¹⁶² Op-eds and editorials fall under the umbrella of opinion journalism, which also requires the author to be well-informed and reflected about the subject. Editorials, in particular, are a statement of serious intent from a newspaper, because the editor is taking time to produce a very visible piece that represents the entire newspaper and its stance about a conflict.

5.2.1 Front-page occurrence and column space

	Rwanda	Myanmar
Dagbladet	0	0
Klassekampen	14	0
Verdens Gang	2	0

Figure 5.2.1: How many stories were on the front page.

In 1994, Klassekampen had the news about the Rwandan genocide (and/or the refugee crisis) on the front page fourteen times, which accounts for 17% of their total of 82 articles about Rwanda. Compared to Dagbladet, that had Rwanda on their front pages zero times, and Verdens Gang, two times out of 73 articles (2.7%), Klassekampen led the way in putting more emphasis on the crisis in Rwanda and making it more visible to the readers. It seems rather pointless to present the collective front-page occurrence, given the fact that one newspaper accounts for most of the statistics, but it is nevertheless 6.66%. The data of the

¹⁶² Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 113.

Myanmar coverage, interestingly, shows zero front-page occurrences across all newspapers. As with the drop in the total number of articles, I would like to be cautious with drawing any definitive conclusions about this until I have completed the entire analysis. At this time, I can only propose similar explanations to the ones in 5.1 – the Myanmar situation might not have held the same amount of gravity in the public discourse as the genocide and refugee crisis in Rwanda. There were 240 articles dedicated to the Rwandan genocide, yet it appeared on the front covers only 16 times. The fact that there was absolutely no mention of Myanmar on the front pages of the three newspapers indicates that this crisis was given low priority.

5.2.2 Column space

The column space provided for the Rwanda and Myanmar crises is another indication about how much visibility the articles received. The amount of column space dedicated to these conflicts relates to the question of agenda-setting and prioritization of these faraway conflicts. The articles that covered less than a quarter of the column space were typically notices that contained either no images, or small ones that did not occupy a lot of space on the page. The mid-range articles (from half a page to three quarters) ranged between the different genres but again either included small images, or none at all. The final unit of coding, more than three quarters of a page, were typically longer pieces that were accompanied by very large and visible images, sometimes over two pages. Therefore, column space and image use go hand-in-hand to a certain extent, because to fill an entire newspaper page with text would require a very high word count, given the discrepancy between the font size and the dimensions of a newspaper.

It is important to note that Klassekampen switched their format from broadsheet to tabloid in the intervening years between the two crises. The main consequence of this is that the physical copies of the newspaper became smaller, and thus the amount of information that could fit within the parameters of a single page was reduced. This counts for both text and visuals. This does not theoretically impact the analysis from a visibility perspective, in that, for example, one page of coverage has the same degree of visibility to the reader in either format. It does, however, impact the amount of information that can fit onto the page. Consequently, this has to be factored in when comparing the individual data from Klassekampen's coverage of the two conflicts. If one page in broadsheet has more room for text and images than a page in the tabloid format, then we should see a symmetrical rise in

column space occupancy in the Myanmar coverage, assuming that the coverage is equal for both conflicts.

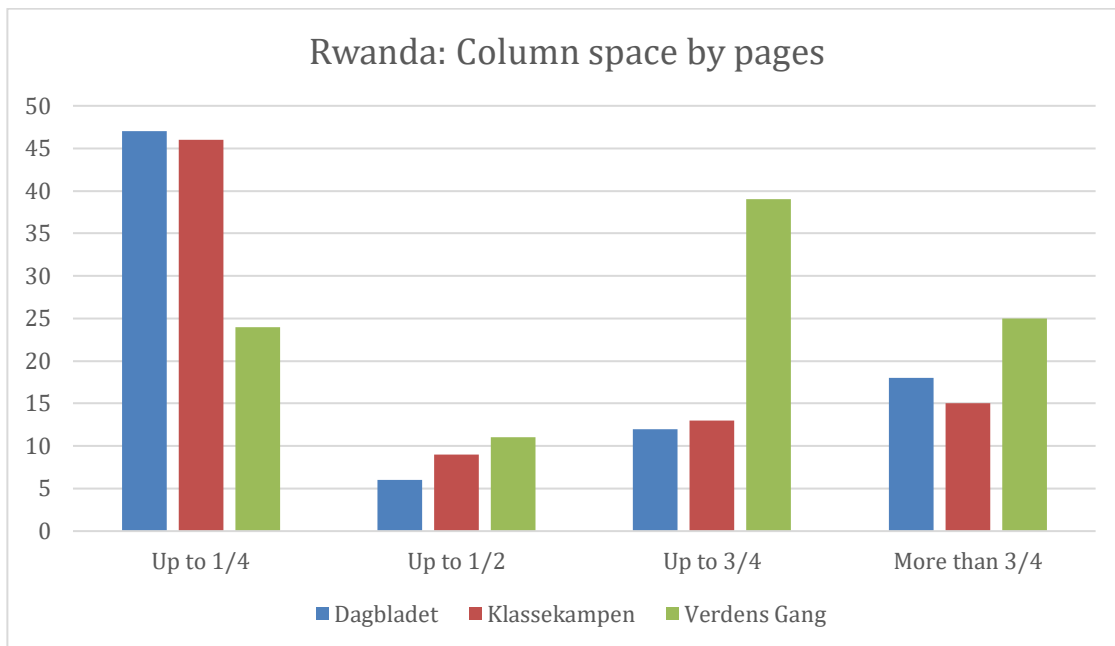


Figure 5.2.2: Rwanda coverage: Column space measured by the page, presented in number of articles.

Unsurprisingly, the largest number of articles is distributed on the lowest-end of the column space variable. There are in total 117 articles that measured up to a quarter of a page, or 48.75% out of 240. On the opposite end, there were 58 articles that occupied more than a quarter of a page in column space, which equals 24.1%. However, if we tally up the last two categories together (“up to $\frac{3}{4}$ ” and “more than $\frac{3}{4}$ ”), the number of articles goes up to 122, or 50.8% of all the collected data. Even though the first category has more entries than any other stand-alone category by some distance, it is interesting to group the upper mid and high ranges because it shows that the larger articles actually fared quite well statistically in the coverage of the Rwandan genocide and refugee crisis. Verdens Gang have to be acknowledged as the main driver of these numbers, because as figure 5.2.2 shows they stood for 64 articles in the third and fourth categories together. Even more interestingly, of the three newspapers, VG had the fewest articles about the Rwandan genocide. Out of a total of 73 articles, 64 (87.7%) were either half a page or longer.

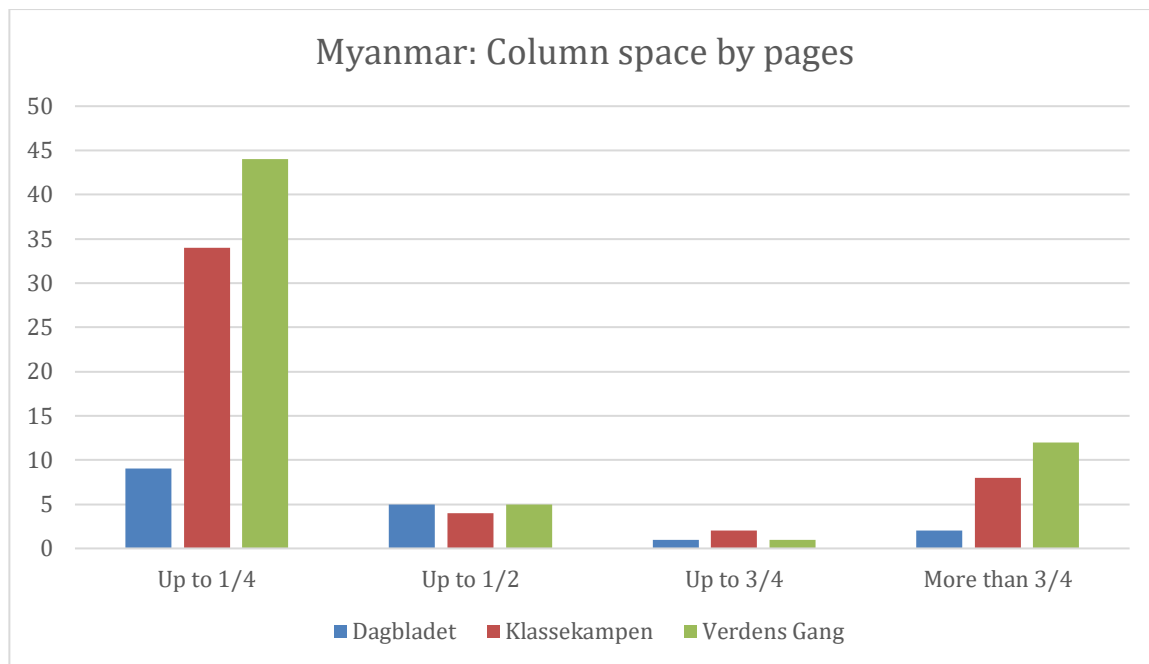


Figure 5.2.3: Myanmar coverage: Column space measured by the page, presented in numbers of articles.

The immediate observation from figure 5.2.3 is that there were drastically fewer articles longer than half a page in the coverage of the Rohingya compared to the coverage of the Rwandan genocide. In fact, 68.5% of the 127 articles about Myanmar were under a quarter of a page long. There were a mere four articles in the third category. However, articles that were longer than three quarters of a page (17.3%) were more prevalent than those that were up to half of a page (11%).

Nonetheless, there is a clear decline of major stories covering Myanmar than there were in the coverage of the Rwandan crisis. As previously presented, Verdens Gang led the overall coverage of Myanmar in terms of the total number of articles, and again they have the most articles that were longer than three quarters of a page, marginally ahead of Klassekampen – 12 and eight respectively. Dagbladet seemingly sleepwalked through the entire Myanmar crisis, and most of their already miniscule coverage was short articles that occupied under half of a newspaper page.

Because of the format change that Klassekampen underwent, I would like to comment on the findings from this newspaper individually, referencing figure 5.2.4 beneath this section. On the surface level, it can be seen that the numbers in the first category (articles taking up less than a quarter of a page) dominated the Myanmar dataset much more than in

the Rwanda material – 70.8% of the 83 articles that Klassekampen contributed with in the 2017 dataset were in this category, compared to 55.4% in 1994. The biggest drop can be seen in the third category (less than three quarters of a page), where the coverage dipped from 15.66% of 83 Klassekampen articles in 1994 to 4.17% of 48 articles in 2017. The two other categories also decreased, by 2,51% in the second category (less than ½) and 1.41% in the fourth (more than ¾).

These data indicate that Klassekampen’s coverage of Myanmar appropriated and embraced the format change, as shorter articles became more regular than in 1994. In addition, the three remaining categories declined in numbers comparatively to their counterparts in the Rwanda coverage. The numbers show that there was no compensation for having less space on the page by extending the articles, in fact the opposite is true. However, this may or may not be a completely valid assumption, because there are indications in other parts of the analysis that Myanmar did not receive the same level of priority from the newspapers as the Rwandan genocide. The decline of larger pieces in the overall coverage of the Myanmar crisis may be just another example of that, or an example of how newspaper journalism has changed over the years.

	≤¼	%	≤½	%	≤¾	%	≥¾	%	Total	%
Rwanda	46	55.42%	9	10.84%	13	15.66%	15	18.07%	83	100%
Myanmar	34	70.84%	4	8.33%	2	4.17%	8	16.66%	48	100%

Figure 5.2.4: Column space distribution of the Klassekampen data.

5.2.3 Authorship

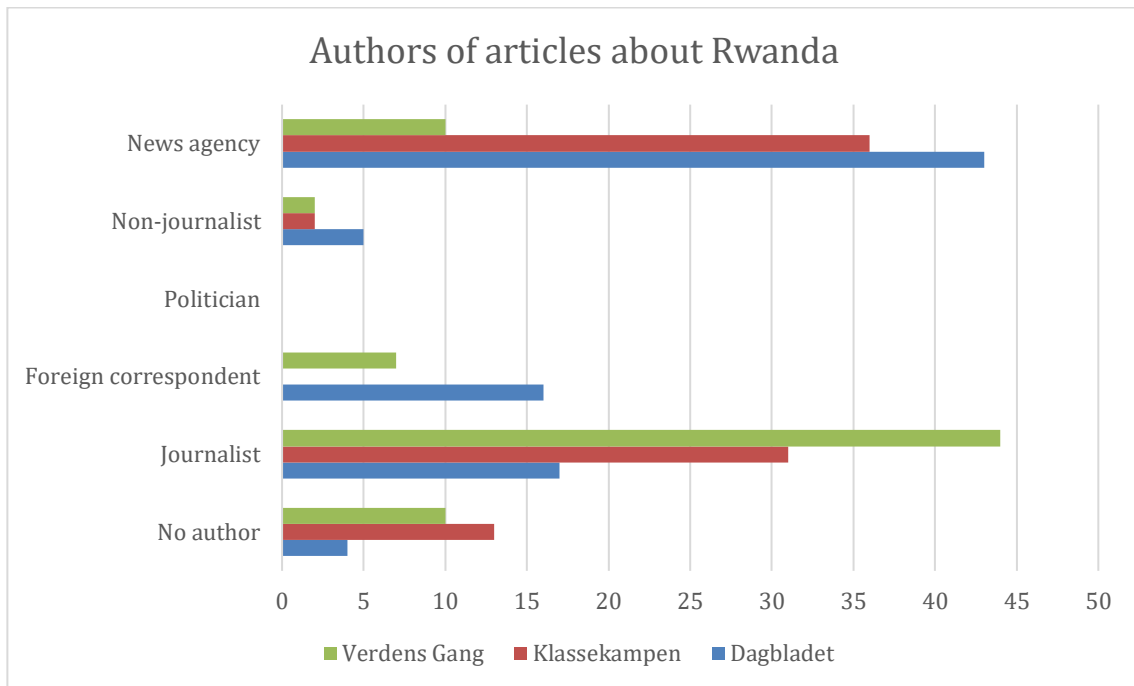


Figure 5.2.5: Authorship of articles about Rwanda, presented in numbers of articles.

The two largest authorship categories in the study about the Rwandan genocide were articles written by news agencies and journalists, respectively 89 (37%) and 92 (38.3%) of a total 240 news items. VG had the largest number of articles written by in-house journalists at 44 pieces, while Klassekampen sat in second place with 31. Dagbladet and Klassekampen relied most heavily on articles written by agencies, having used 43 and 36 such pieces respectively, while VG only published ten articles that were produced by news agencies. Klassekampen had zero articles written by foreign correspondents, which is not very surprising given the fact that they are a smaller newspaper than Dagbladet and VG, and naturally do not have a similar level of resources. 16 of the articles from Dagbladet were authored by their foreign correspondents, while VG had seven, bringing the total tally up to 23, or 9.6% of all 240 articles. Finally, 27 articles (11.25%) were left uncredited to any author. Articles that were written by journalists were about on par with agency-produced pieces in this dataset, while foreign correspondents contributed to about 9.6% of the 240 articles about the Rwandan genocide. Given the distance to the conflict, it is a respectable number of articles. Overall, this conflict received a substantial amount of original reporting.

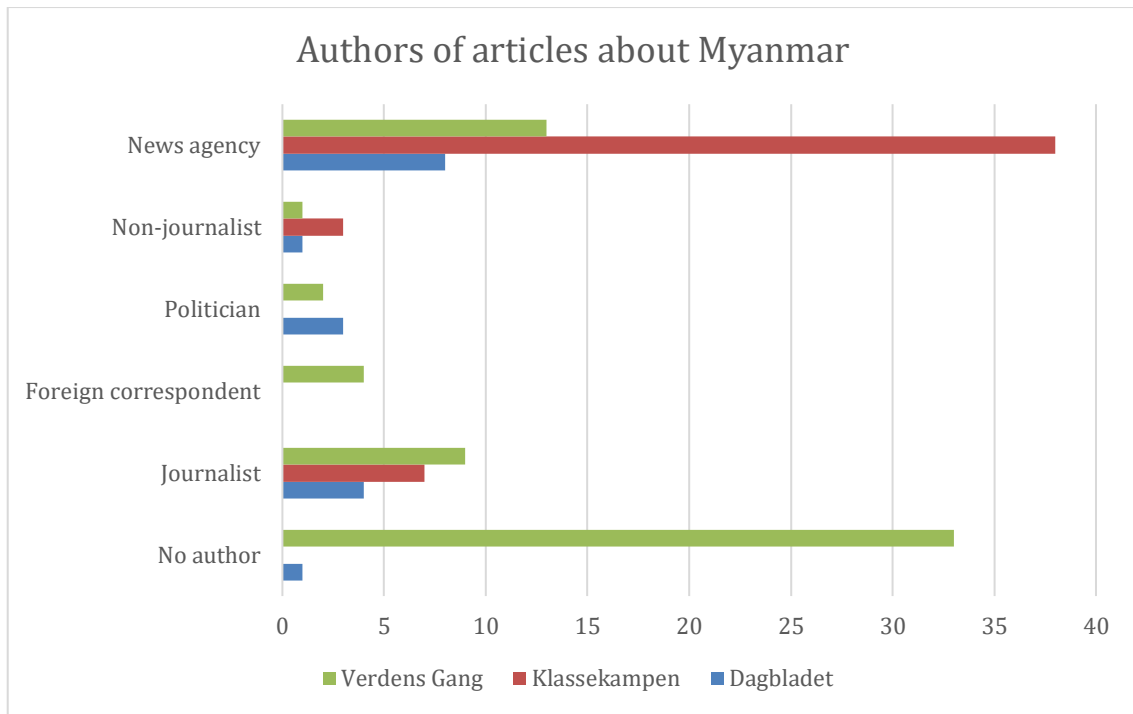


Figure 5.2.6: Authorship of articles about Myanmar, presented in numbers of articles.

The data from the Myanmar study presents a completely different picture. Most articles were either written by agencies or left without an author in the byline. Agency-produced articles made up the largest category, standing for 46.46% (59 of 127 articles) of the overall coverage. Within this category, Klassekampen had by far the largest number of articles – 38 out of 59, or 64.4% of all the agency-produced content. Only VG had published articles written by foreign correspondents, although only four (3.1% of the entire dataset). The same newspaper had the most articles written by journalists, 9 out of 20 in this category. Finally, this set of data yielded five articles that were written by politicians, whereas there were none in the dataset from the coverage of the Rwandan genocide.

The most noticeable statistical difference in the two datasets is that the amount of content produced by the newspapers' own journalists dramatically shrunk between the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the 2017 Myanmar crisis, and that there is a larger reliance on content from news agencies. The slightly anomalous observation is that VG had such a high number of unauthored articles, which most likely indicates that the accreditation practices had changed but that these articles were potentially written by one or more in-house journalists. This means that the statistics may be unfairly skewed, but it is difficult to make such a claim without getting confirmation about this from the editor. However, the data

indicates that the newspapers dedicated fewer resources to original reporting of the Myanmar crisis compared the coverage of Rwanda.

5.2.4 Article genre

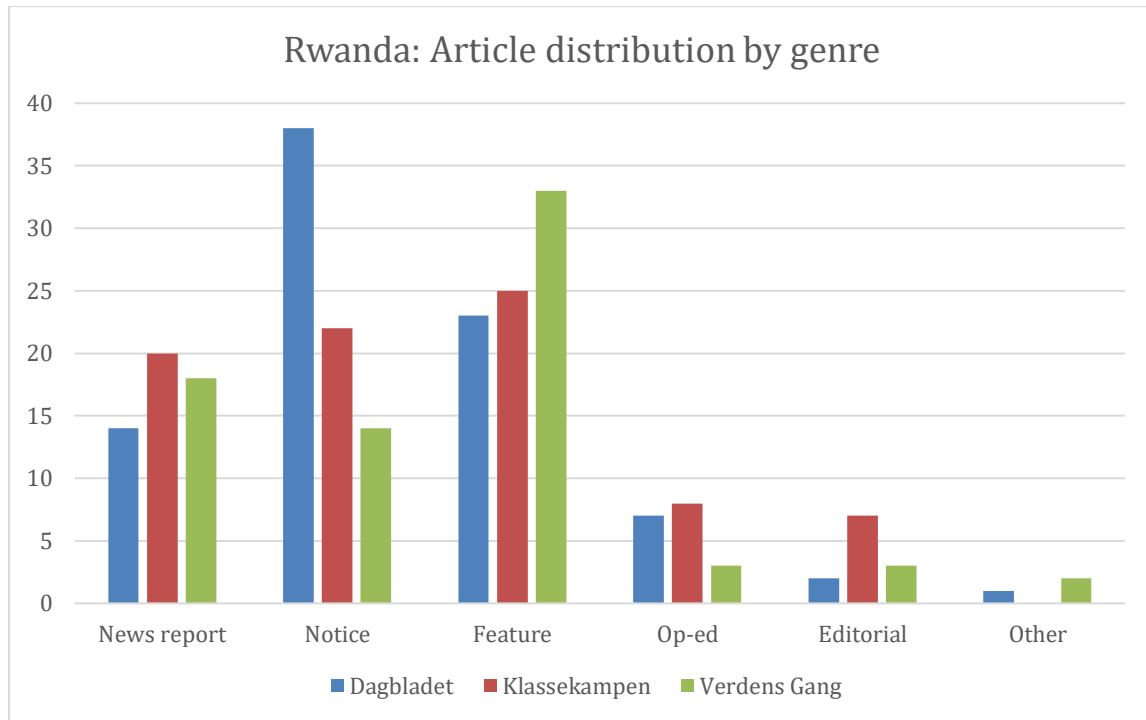


Figure 5.2.7: Rwanda coverage: article distribution by genre, presented in numbers of articles.

Notices represent the second-largest category in the genre distribution chart as seen in figure 5.2.7. There were 74 notices published about the Rwandan genocide, which amounts to 30.8% of coverage (240 articles). Dagbladet published the most notices out of the three newspapers with 38, while Klassekampen and Verdens Gang had put out respectively 22 and 14. Interestingly, the most-represented category is articles that were labelled as features, which as I have previously established is a substantially more detailed way to cover a conflict. Out of all 240 articles, there were 81 features (33.75%) and 52 news reports (21.7%), with a fairly even spread across the newspapers. There were also a number of opinion pieces and editorials in the coverage of Rwanda. 18 op-eds constitute 7.5% of the coverage, and only VG were lagging behind in this category, with just three op-eds. Klassekampen published the most editorials, seven out of a total 12, which reinforces their status as the slightly more politically focused newspaper. All in all, the spread of genre was quite diverse and reasonably balanced. The least resource-intensive articles to produce, such as notices, were not disproportionately represented when all of the other genres are taken into

consideration, and there was a reasonably high number of heavier pieces written about the conflict in Rwanda, such as features, opinion articles and editorials. The variety of genres that is represented here indicates that the newsrooms were committed to covering the Rwandan genocide using different journalistic styles – with factual reporting, opinion content, as well as in-depth and descriptive pieces like features.

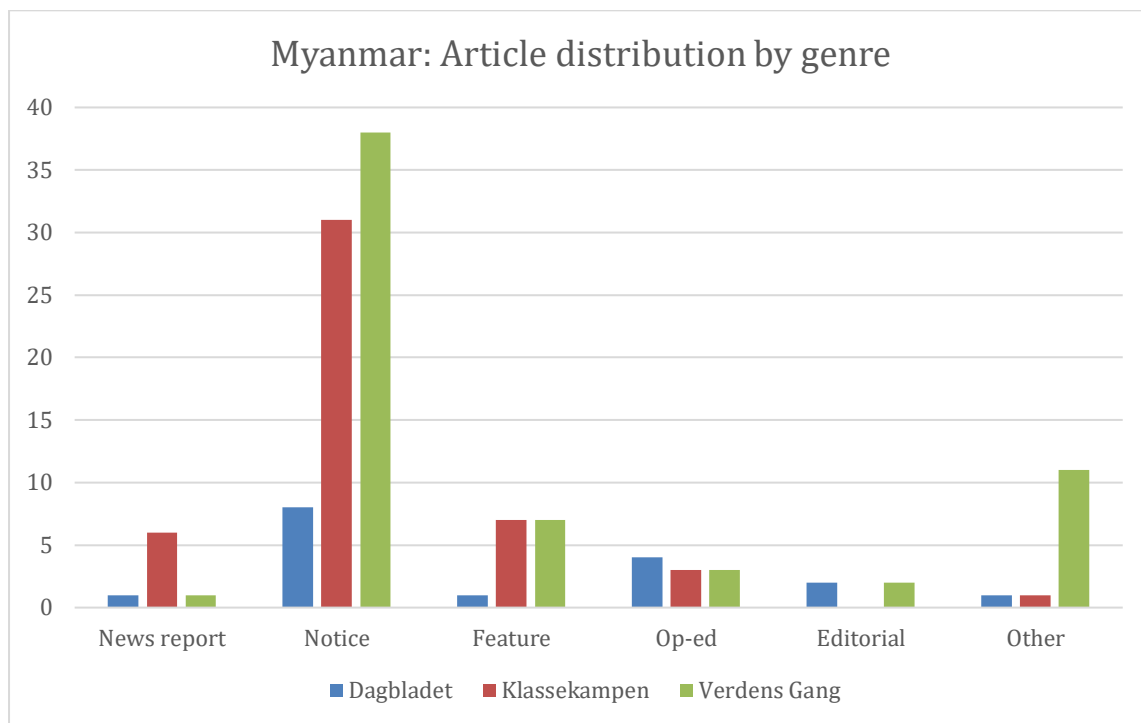


Figure 5.2.8: Myanmar coverage: article distribution by genre, presented in numbers of articles.

The statistics in figure 5.2.8 show an entirely different story when it comes to the genre distribution of the articles related to the Myanmar crisis. The first thing that stands out is how disproportionately dominant notices were in the coverage compared to all of the other genres. They made up 60.6% of the entire dataset, or 77 out of 127 articles. Dagbladet had a substantially lower number of notices compared to the other two newspapers but they had generally contributed the least to the coverage of Myanmar in terms of articles published.

When it comes to more in-depth articles, of 127 total articles, there were eight news reports (6.3%) and 15 feature articles (11.8%). In addition, there were ten op-eds (7.9%), fairly evenly divided between the three outlets, and four editorials (3.1%), of which Dagbladet and VG published two each. The latter also had 11 articles in the category “other”, out of a total 13 (10.2%). These articles were deemed unfit for any other category and it is notable that there was a significant upswing in these in the coverage of the Myanmar conflict

compared to the coverage of Rwanda. Apart from that, the main contrast in the genres used in reporting these two conflicts is that the distribution was more unbalanced in the 2017 Myanmar dataset. Across the Rwanda coverage a more diverse distribution of the article genres can be observed. This indicates that the reporting itself was more varied, informative and nuanced, whereas in the coverage of the Myanmar crisis was overwhelmed by notices. The statistical difference in the number of notices was quite significant, 60.6% for Myanmar versus 30.8% for Rwanda (percentages taken from the total number of articles). In light of the significant drop in the total article output between 1994 and 2017, the decline in original and investigative reporting appears even more problematic. If these results are translated into how highly these conflicts were prioritized on the agenda, then the coverage of the Myanmar crisis comes out in a much weaker position than the coverage of Rwanda.

5.3 Story focus

This section of the analysis will present the data distribution of the story focus in the articles. As a reminder to the reader, this variable is denoting the theme or focus of each individual article in the dataset. Figure 5.3.1 showcases the collective distribution of the story focus (see chapter 4.5.8 for more details). This variable, similarly to the variables in chapter 5.4 (the sourcing) and 5.5.2 (the image focus) was coded in such a way that each article could potentially have had more than one theme (or in the case of the other variables; more than one source, or more than one image focus).

Because of this, I had to slightly tweak the way in which I analyze these datasets. The percentage of these categories will not represent their occurrences in relation to the number of articles, but instead the interrelation of all the categories put together. For example, the Rwanda dataset yielded 510 registrations in total, so each category or sub-group will be examined in proportion with this number. In chapter six, I will present the same data with percentages calculated from the total amount of articles to showcase the prevalence of each category independent of each other. The charts below will be used to analyze the tendencies of the coverage in terms of what type of stories the Norwegian press decided to publish, and what the contrasts and similarities between the coverage of each of the two conflicts were.

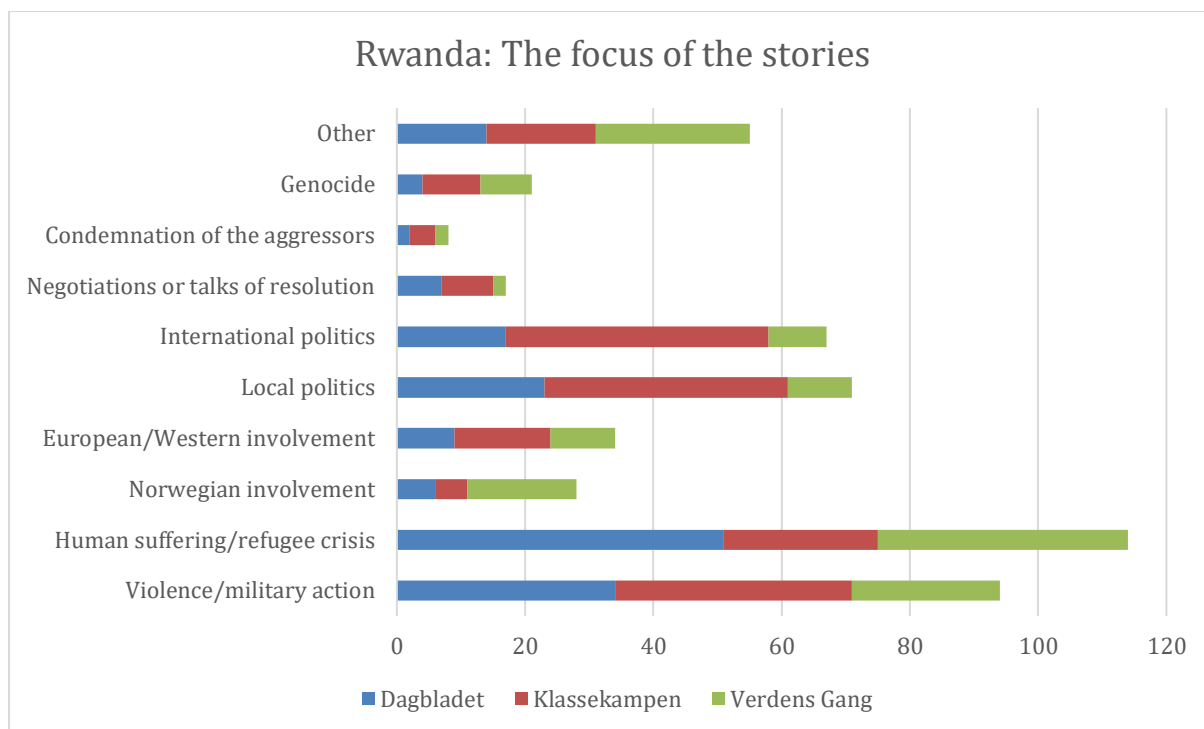


Figure: 5.3.1: Rwanda coverage: The focus of the stories, presented in numbers of registered cases.

Because this section deals with a lot of categories, it can be useful to package them into collective sub-groups. For example, the last two categories (“human suffering” and “violence/military action”) can be related to the sensationalist and dramatic aspects of conflict coverage, i.e. angles that satisfy one of the most common criteria of this type of news. These were the two largest categories, with respectively 114 and 95 articles that covered these themes, or 41% of this entire dataset (209 of 510 entries). We can place the categories “international politics” and “Western/European involvement” in the next sub-group, given that they deal with elite nations and their political interests and involvement. The former had 67 entries and the latter 34, and together they made up 19.8% of the total 510 entries. “Norwegian involvement” is a standalone category, with only 28 entries (5.5%). Essentially, the three newspapers placed very little emphasis on covering this conflict through a Norway-centric lens.

In terms of covering the conflict from a Rwandan perspective, “local politics” was registered 71 times, which represents 13.9% of the total number of registrations. The categories “negotiations or talks of resolution” and “condemnation of the aggressors” can be grouped together as they deal with the more normative and moralistic aspects of conflict coverage. The former was registered 17 times, and the latter eight – and altogether they

tallied up to 25, or 4.9% of all the entries. The number of articles that explicitly mentioned or alluded to the fact that a genocide had taken place was 25, or 4.1% of 510. Finally, there were 55 (10.8%) articles that did not fit into any of the aforementioned categories and were placed into the category “other”.

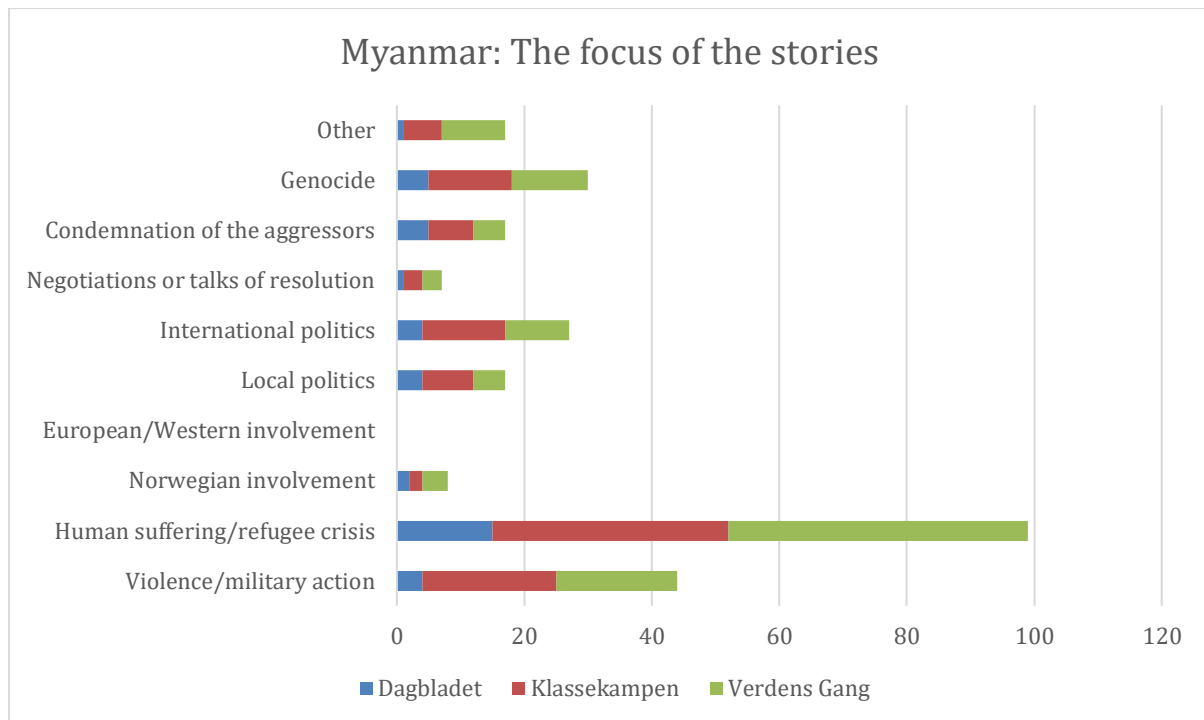


Figure 5.3.2: Myanmar coverage: The focus of the stories, presented in numbers of registered cases.

Similar to the coverage of the Rwandan genocide, the two largest categories in the Myanmar dataset were “human suffering” and “violence/military action”. Together, these were registered 187 times out of a total 310 cases, which is 60.3%. Individually, the former had 143 cases and the latter 44.

Interestingly, the category known as “genocide” had the third-most entries, with 30 registered cases. In terms of the percentage, this represents 9.7%. There was even less mention of Norwegian involvement, with it being the story focus only eight times – or in 2.6% of the 310 collected cases. There were zero articles relating to European or Western involvement, however international politics was the topic in 27 cases (8.7% of 310). Local politics was registered 17 times, or in 5.5% of the cases. The final sub-group, consisting of the categories “negotiations or talks of resolution” and “condemnation of the aggressors” yielded a total of 24 occurrences, or 7.7%, which is a slightly higher percentage than in the Rwanda coverage. 5.5% (17) of the articles were labelled as “other”.

The one similarity in the coverage of the two conflicts is that there was a heavy focus on stories about human suffering, violence and other dramatic scenarios in both instances. However, in the Myanmar coverage, these categories took up a much larger chunk of the overall distribution of the themes (60% compared to the 41% in the Rwanda coverage). Consequently, it means that all the other themes were less prevalent than was the case in the Rwanda dataset, which appeared slightly more balanced (in other words more varied). This means that the coverage of Rwanda dedicated more space to topics like local politics, but also focused heavily on international politics and the interests of elite nations. In terms of covering the possibilities of a conflict resolution and reporting on condemnations, the two datasets were fairly level. The one commonality was that the most prevalent theme in the two datasets was human suffering and the refugee crisis.

5.4 The sourcing

This chapter focuses on the sourcing of the events in Rwanda and Myanmar. Specifically, I will analyze the distribution of sources in order to find out what kind of patterns emerge. As in the previous chapter, each category will be looked at in proportion with the total number of sources in each dataset. At the end of the chapter, I will compare the two sets of data to pinpoint the similarities and contrasts. In chapter six, I will present the same data with percentages calculated from the total number of articles to see the proportionality of each source category.

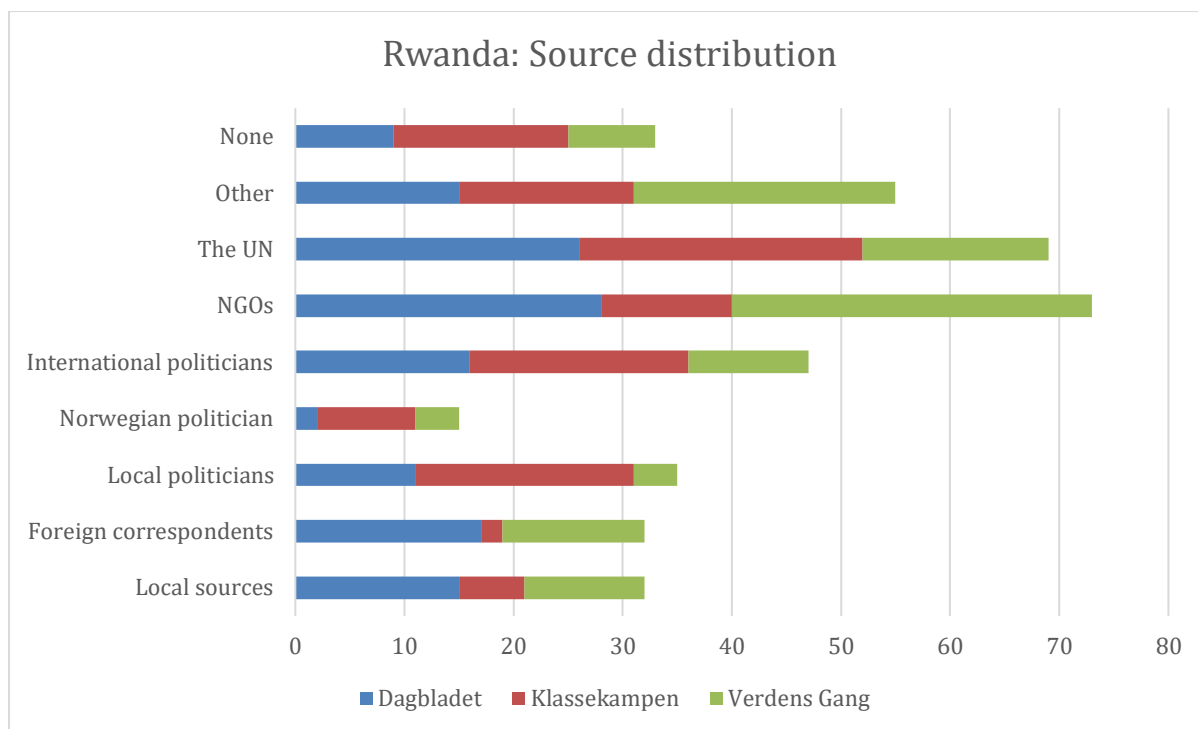


Figure 5.4.1: Rwanda coverage: Source distribution, presented in numbers of registered cases.

There were 391 sources registered across 240 articles in the Rwanda dataset. Figure 5.4.3 showcases the percentage distribution for both datasets. NGOs emerged as the most used source of information with 73 registered cases (18.7% of 391), closely followed by the United Nations at 69 (17.65% of 391 cases). International politicians were relied on for information 47 times, or in 12% of all cases, while local politicians were used as a source 35 times (9%). Norwegian politicians made up only 15 registered cases (3.8% of 391) in the material. Foreign correspondents and local sources were cited 32 (8.2%) times each. In 33 of the 391 cases (8.5%), the source was not disclosed or left ambiguous. Finally, 55 sources (14%) were classified as “other”, meaning that they did not fit into any of the other categories.

The United Nations and international politicians, which can be labelled as official and elite sources collectively provided information 29.7% of the time, which is just under a third of the entire dataset. Local sources and foreign correspondents, or in other words sources “on the ground” were used in 16.4% of the cases. The majority of information came from elite and official sources, followed by NGOs, who offer a different perspective to the one of the United Nations or Western politicians. Local sources and reporting from foreign

correspondents were also relied on to a fairly substantial degree. The number of articles with no sourcing was not overwhelmingly high, but still somewhat significant.

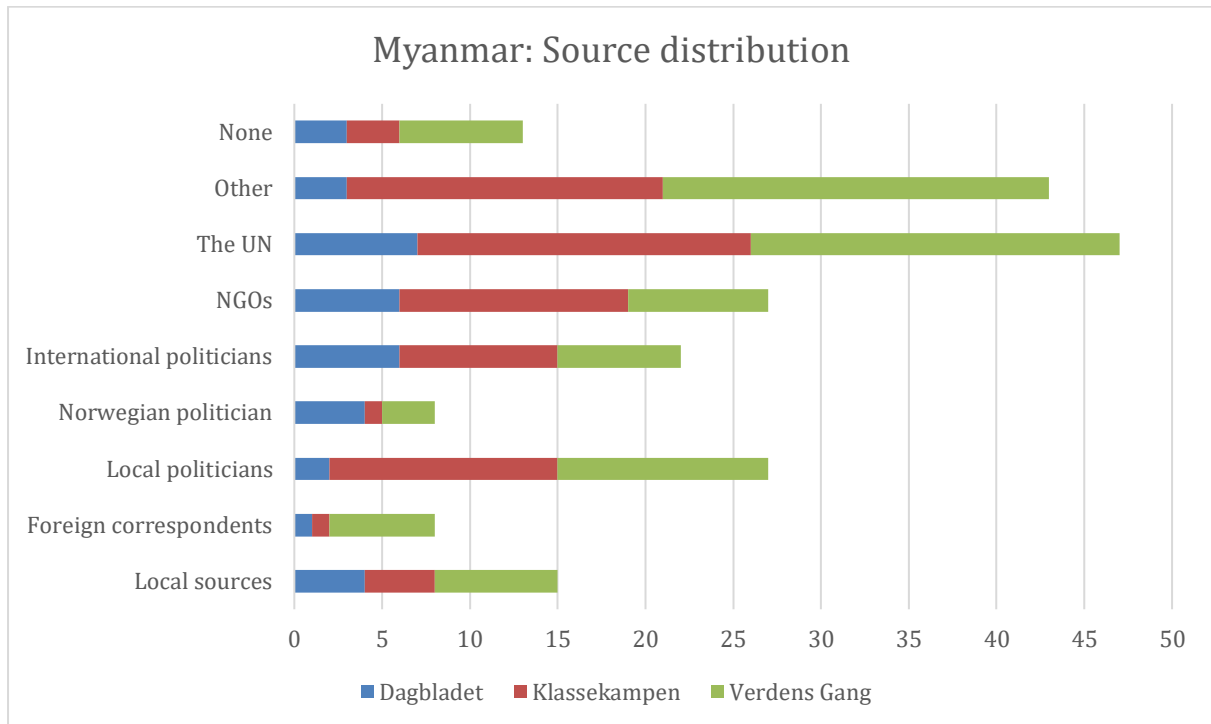


Figure 5.4.2: Myanmar coverage: Source distribution, presented in numbers of registered cases.

The Myanmar dataset consisted of 210 entries and the percentages are calculated from this number. 47 (22.4%) of those came from the United Nations, while 43 of the cases (20.5%) were registered in the category “other”. NGOs were used as a source 27 times (12.8%) and 13 articles were unsourced (6.2%). Local politicians were sourced more frequently than their international counterparts, at 27 entries (12.9%) versus 22 (10.5%). Norwegian politicians, however, were only cited a source eight times, and the ratio of 3.8% was identical to the Rwandan dataset. Foreign correspondents provided the outlets with information eight times (3.8%). Finally, there were 15 instances of local sources in the Myanmar material.

Élite and official sources collectively provided 32.9% of the information during the Myanmar crisis. On-the-ground reporting (foreign correspondents) and the use of local sources made up 10.95% of the collected data. Both of these figures more or less mirror the numbers from the Rwanda material (29.7% and 16.4% respectively). However, the use of NGOs as a source in the Myanmar coverage at 12.8% was considerably lower than the 18.7% in the Rwanda dataset, where this was the largest single category of sources.

The source distribution was slightly less varied in the Myanmar coverage as a result of two categories taking up a lot of the data: “other” and “the UN”. However, it is not a very dramatic difference for most of the categories, as can be seen in figure 5.4.3 below. Apart from the difference in the “NGOs” category, the only other significant drop is in the use of foreign correspondents, which admittedly is troubling given how critical their insights can be in a conflict situation.

	Rwanda	Myanmar
None	8.5%	6.2%
Other	14%	20.6%
The UN	17.6%	22.4%
NGOs	18.7%	12.8%
International politicians	12%	10.5%
Norwegian politicians	3.8%	3.8%
Local politicians	9%	12.8%
Foreign correspondents	8.2%	3.8%
Local sources	8.2%	7.1%
Total cases	391	210

Figure 5.4.3: Source distribution comparison by percentages.

5.5 Photographs and images: quantity and image focus

In this two-part section, I analyze the the frequency of images in articles, after which I compare and contrast the data across the two conflicts. This determines the use of visual components in the coverage of the conflicts, which in turn will provide more insight into the overall visibility of these stories. As mentioned in chapter 3.5, image use is directly linked with how much attention a story receives from readers. In addition, the analysis of the sets of data relating to the image focus will be approached in a similar way as story focus. This will expand the analysis for more discussion regarding the more qualitative aspects of the way images and photographs were used in the reporting, for example in regard to the framing of the conflicts and the representation of the victims.

5.5.1 Quantifying the images

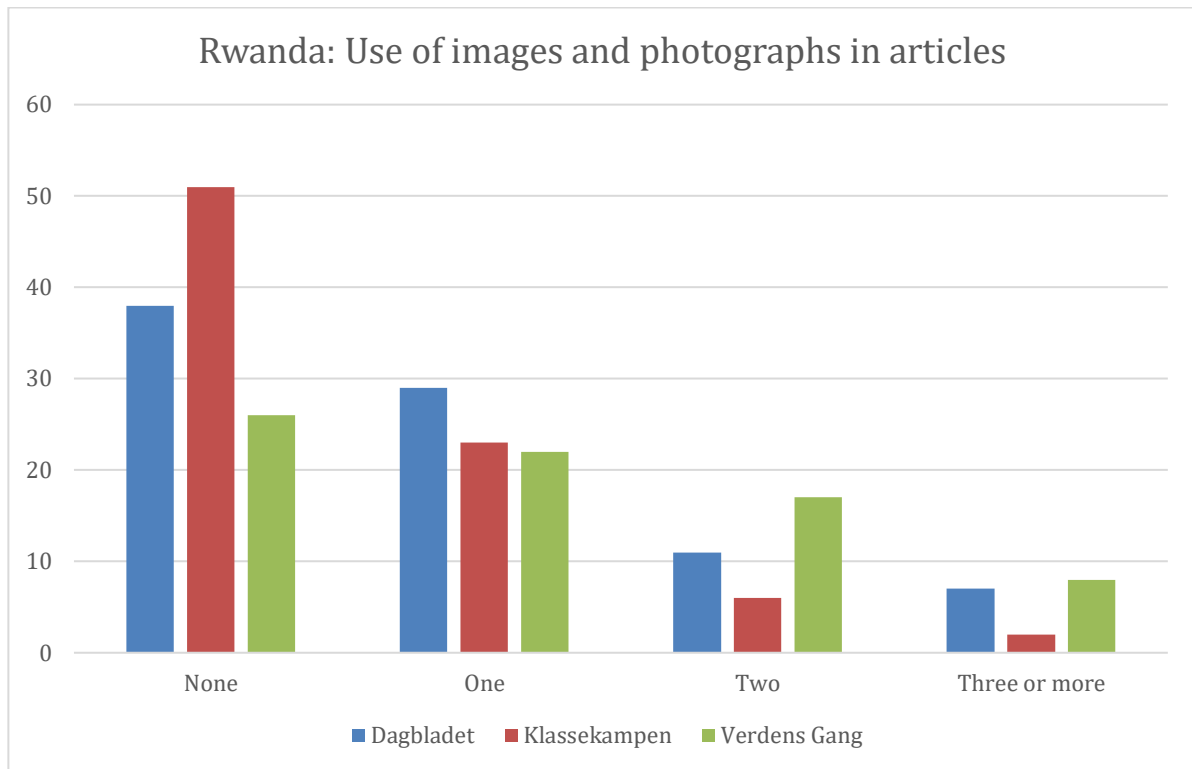


Figure 5.5.1: Rwanda coverage: Use of images and photographs in articles, presented in numbers of articles.

Out of 240 articles, 115 did not contain any images or photographs, which is 47.9% of the total Rwanda coverage. This means that more than half of the articles had one or more visual components. To unpack the entire distribution, 30.8% (74) of all of the articles contained one image, 14.2% (34 articles) had two and 7% (17 articles) had three or more images. A steady downward curve can be drawn in figure 5.5.1, which showcases that the percentage number is more or less halved as we jump from one category to the next.

Overall, the coverage of the Rwandan genocide included a substantial number of visual components. Factoring out the notices, which typically are not accompanied by images, we can roughly estimate that there were potentially around 41 non-notice articles without any images or photographs in them. Again, the visual component is very important in terms of drawing the readers to an article, and in this sense, the Rwanda coverage had a good chance to stand out in the overall news agenda.

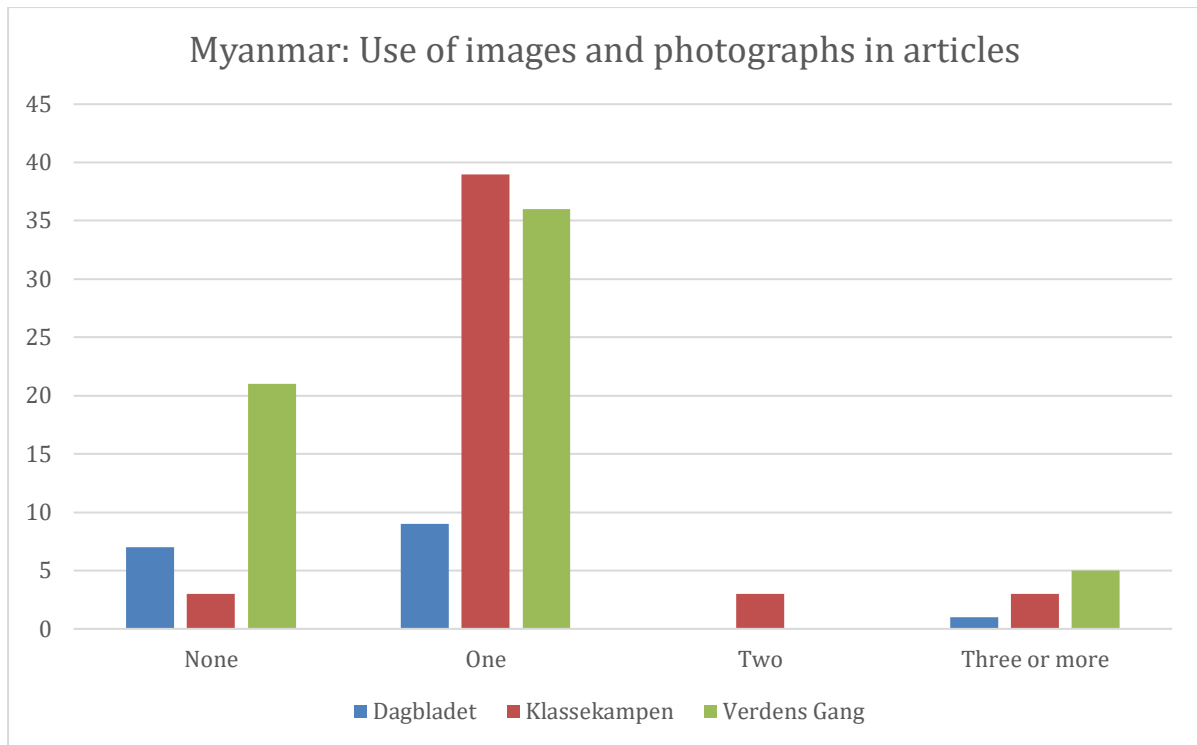


Figure 5.5.2: Myanmar coverage: Use of images and photographs in articles, presented in numbers of articles.

In the coverage of the Myanmar crisis, there were 31 articles that had zero images or photographs, which is 24.4% of the entire coverage. This means that 75.6% of all 127 articles included one or more visual components. In this sense, the Myanmar coverage had quite a strong visual presence. However, 66.1% of the articles had one photo, and beyond this the numbers plummet. Only three articles had two photos (2.4% of the coverage), and nine had three or more (7.1%).

5.5.2 Image focus

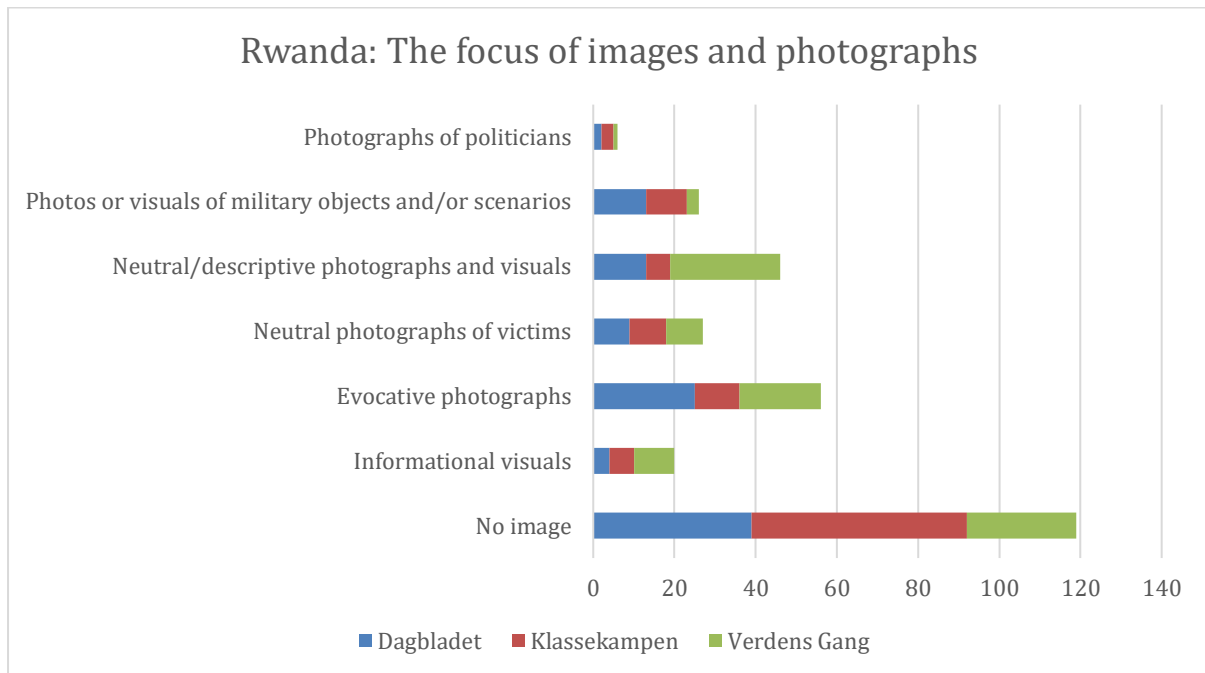


Figure 5.5.3: Rwanda coverage: The focus of images and photographs, presented in numbers of registered cases.

The second-largest category after “No image” is “evocative photographs” with 56 registered instances in the dataset. These are the kinds of images that immediately grab the reader’s attention and bring out feelings of sympathy, shock, horror or sadness. In other words, it is the kinds of images that satisfy the traditional news values criteria that relate to drama, human suffering and shock. The other categories that also relate to similar criteria are “photos or visuals of military objects and/or scenarios” and “photographs of politicians”, which respectively have 26 and six registered occurrences. Altogether, the three categories stand for 88 out of 181 cases, excluding the “no image” category (keeping in mind that one image can have more than one points of focus). This means that 48.6% of all the images were either focused on drama, suffering or personification (either of victims or politicians).

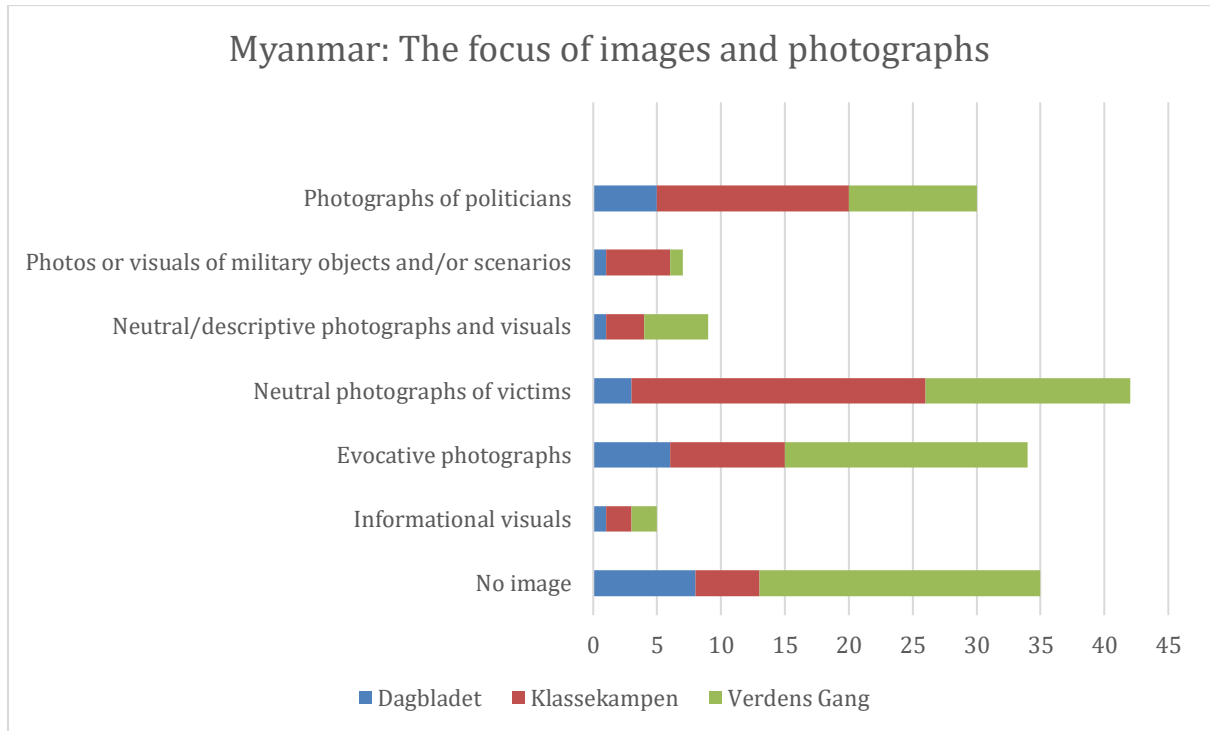


Figure 5.5.4: Myanmar coverage: The focus of images and photographs, presented in numbers of registered cases.

In the Myanmar dataset, the three categories that relate to the classic news values criteria (politicians, military scenarios and evocative photographs), were registered 71 times of 127 cases, or 55.9% of the cases if the “no image” category is once again excluded. The largest contrast between the two conflicts is that in the Rwanda coverage, “photographs of politicians” was the least represented category, whereas in the case of Myanmar, it is one of the largest with 30 registered occurrences. This is perhaps due to the fact that the leader of Myanmar, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, came under a lot of media scrutiny for not doing enough to put an end to the persecution of the Rohingya people. Because of this, the coverage of the Myanmar crisis was significantly more person-focused than the Rwandan genocide. Finally, the largest standalone category in this section of the Myanmar dataset was “neutral photographs of victims” with 42 registered instances, or 33.1% of the all of the images. In chapter 4.5.10, I explained that these photographs are a counter-weight to the category “evocative photographs”, specifically because they are not focused on human suffering. In comparison, there were 27 such images in the Rwanda dataset, or 14.9% of all the registered cases.

6 Discussing the findings

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical foundation of this thesis. The emphasis will be on how the coverage of the two conflicts compares in terms of agenda-setting and framing. In addition, the contrasts and similarities of the reporting will be viewed in the wider context of the changing landscape of the newspaper industry, as well as the impacts that the dominant geopolitical currents have on Western coverage of distant conflicts. Coleman et al. define agenda-setting as “the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others.”¹⁶³ More coverage equals more importance placed on a particular issue. Agenda-setting is also described as a by-product of the space and time limitations of a medium, in this case newspapers, meaning that the news has to be edited and selected based on various factors, one of them being a set of news values.¹⁶⁴

There are two levels of studying agenda setting effects; the first with an emphasis on how much media coverage an issue receives and the second with a view at *how* an issue is being covered and discussed.¹⁶⁵ Or as Coleman et al. put it themselves: “The first level of agenda setting is concerned with the influence of the media on which objects are the center of public attention. The second level focuses on how people understand the things that have captured their attention.”¹⁶⁶ In a sense, the second level of agenda setting connects to framing. Robert Entman writes that to frame is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient [...] in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”¹⁶⁷

Chapter 6.1 focuses on the first level of agenda-setting in order to ascertain how much priority the two conflicts received in comparison with each other. Chapters 6.2 and 6.3 delve into the second level of agenda setting and framing perspectives in order to look at which frames and sources stood out in the coverage. These factors will be reviewed with an

¹⁶³ Coleman, et al., «Agenda Setting», 147-160.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Entman, «Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm», 52.

emphasis on the news values that drove selection and framing. The following chapters discuss the findings with the purpose of answering the three supplementary questions, leading to a broader deliberation of how the coverage of the Rwanda and Myanmar crises compares in chapter 6.4.

6.1 Agenda setting and prioritization of the conflicts

How does the coverage of the two conflicts compare in regard to agenda-setting and priority?

There were 240 articles written about the Rwandan genocide with a fairly even distribution across the three newspapers. The 127 articles that were published about the Myanmar crisis represent a drop of about 47% compared to the Rwanda coverage. However, Dagbladet stood out as the main culprit in the drop. Their low output had a direct impact on the collective number of articles. The Myanmar crisis seemed to indeed have a slightly lower priority than the Rwandan genocide in Klassekampen and Verdens Gang, but Dagbladet had a much more drastic drop in the number of articles.

The Rwandan genocide appeared on the frontpages 16 times, which is 6.66% of the total number of articles across all three newspapers, whereas Myanmar did not make the cover at all. Frontpage occurrence was not very high in the case of the Rwanda crisis, but the complete lack of frontpage items in the Myanmar coverage indicates a significant decrease in terms of the story's importance and its place on the agenda. In addition, there was a significant drop in how much column space that was occupied by the Myanmar crisis, compared to the genocide in Rwanda. Less than two thirds of the articles were over a quarter of a page in the Myanmar dataset, whereas more than half of the articles about Rwanda were above this. This means that articles about Rwanda were both more prominently displayed and arguably more informative. This claim can be further substantiated by the fact that notices made up more than 60% of all the articles about Myanmar, while the number of articles of the same genre in the Rwanda dataset was only 30.8%.

Not only did the newspapers publish longer pieces about Rwanda, there was also emphasis on putting their journalists on the task of researching and reporting the conflict. The

coverage of the Rwandan genocide was more genre-diverse – 33.75% were feature articles, 21.7% were news reports and 7.5% op-eds. These types of articles are more time and resource-intensive to produce than notices and it can therefore be argued that the Myanmar crisis did not receive the same level of priority as the Rwandan genocide. 47.9% of all articles about Rwanda were written by either by journalists or foreign correspondents (as opposed to being credited to news agencies or left uncredited), which gives further substance to the claim that the newspapers dedicated more resources to original reporting in 1994. Only 18.85% of the articles in the Myanmar material were credited to journalists or foreign correspondents. This number could, however, be skewed due to the fact that VG had 33 uncredited articles (26% of the total dataset), meaning that these were most likely written by their reporters, but for some reason did not include their name in the byline.

To summarize, the findings above strongly indicate that the Myanmar crisis was lower on the newspapers' agenda than the Rwandan genocide. This is evident firstly by the drop in overall articles about Myanmar and the fact that the story appeared on the front page zero times. There was also a significant decline in the amount of column space occupied by stories about the Rohingya crisis. In addition, 60% of the articles about Myanmar were notices (compared to about 30% in the Rwanda coverage), which indicates that the story was not prioritized in terms of resource allocation for independent research and time to write original content. Only around 19% of the Myanmar stories were written by the newspapers' own journalists or foreign correspondents, compared to almost 48% in the Rwanda coverage.

Journalistic genres that are used in conflict reporting can also be somewhat revealing of the prioritization of a story. As Elisabeth Eide pointed out, an over-reliance on notices and agency-produced content can be indicative of a lack of resources that leads to less nuanced and more superficial coverage of distant conflicts.¹⁶⁸ The structure of a newspaper plays a big role in fulfilling the expectations of the reader. The placement of articles, the genres and the use of images signal to the reader what they are about to consume, before they even read a single word. Images are used to convey visual information and to catch the reader's eye. Large headlines indicate a higher level of priority for the story.

¹⁶⁸ Eide, «Inn i det tredje rom: Ensidighet og gjensidighet», 9-28.

The genres follow different norms in their styles, visual disposition and the linguistic approach.¹⁶⁹ The feature article is an example of a genre that needs more time and resources to produce. It is a more literary depiction of a story and requires the journalist to travel to where the story is, often accompanied by a photographer. It is a genre that documents the human aspects of a story. It may portray a certain environment or atmosphere and convey people's experiences and outlook.¹⁷⁰ But because feature articles are so resource-intensive to produce, they are more often deprioritized by editors. It is simply cheaper to churn out factual news items in large quantities than to dedicate weeks or months to produce a feature.¹⁷¹ Certainly, there were far fewer features in the Myanmar coverage compared to Rwanda – making up only 11.8% of the dataset compared to 33.75% in the Rwanda material. Figures 5.2.7 and 5.2.8 illustrate a dramatic drop in genre diversity from 1994 to 2017. The coverage of Rwanda included far more news articles, features and opinion pieces, whereas the Myanmar coverage was largely concentrated towards the notice.

The coverage of the Myanmar crisis had more visual elements than the coverage of Rwanda. More than 75% of the articles contained one or more images, whereas only 52.1% of all the articles in the Rwanda dataset included visuals. As previously mentioned, the presence of images helps draw the attention of the reader to a story. However, the increase in the use of images is more connected to the overall development of the newspaper medium. The so-called “tabloidization”, or modernization, of the press has made images an integral part of a newspaper's design. It is a trend that has been almost universally adopted, exemplified by the fact that Klassekampen shifted from broadsheet to the tabloid format in the years between the Rwandan genocide and the Myanmar crisis. In fact, they had the biggest swing in image use in the two conflicts. 21.25% of their articles about Rwanda did not include a single image, and this number dropped to 2% in their coverage of the Myanmar crisis.

There is a reasonable amount of evidence to suggest that the coverage of the Rohingya crisis was less extensive than that of Rwanda. This decline points to a lower level of prioritization and salience placed on the events in Myanmar, which highlights the larger picture of the developments in the newspaper industry. The tabloidization of the press has

¹⁶⁹ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 102-103.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 117.

been previously cited as an influence on the changes in the format, the layout and potentially the content of contemporary newspapers. The clearest indication of the changes in the composition of conflict coverage is the increase in the use of visuals in the coverage of Myanmar and the difference in the amount of column space that was dedicated to each crisis.

There was also less genre diversity as features and opinion pieces were less prevalent in the reporting of the Rohingya crisis. Previous research about journalistic genres have shown a decline in the use of the feature in Norwegian journalism. This has been attributed to economic considerations and time-constraints, as features are typically a more resource-intensive genre to produce. The findings in this study affirm the trend the decreasing prevalence of the feature article in Norwegian journalism. To add to the point about dedication of time and resources, far more articles about of the Rwandan genocide were written by the journalists and foreign correspondents of each newspaper, meaning that there was more original content than in the Myanmar reporting, where agency-produced content and notices dominated substantially. There was a clear difference in the composition of the conflict coverage between these two crises. There is a case to be made that the overall quality of the reporting of Myanmar dropped because of the decrease in the production of more comprehensive articles (such as features) and original content, although this claim would have to be investigated by a deeper qualitative analysis.

The geopolitical aspect cannot be overlooked. These conflicts occurred in two different time periods that represented vastly different geopolitical landscapes. The ending of the Cold War marked a change in the overall geopolitical situation in the world. Western states no longer had the incentive to be directly implicated in ideologically driven conflicts and wars, thus bringing forth new types of conflicts onto the news agenda. The terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 once again altered the geopolitical landscape in a profound way. Thus, the United States-led War on Terror became the dominant narrative in war and conflict reporting in Western news media. It could therefore be argued that the conflict in Myanmar (and other conflicts like it) received less news coverage because it did not fit into this geopolitical narrative. As Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge pointed out, there are a vast number of events going on in the world at any one time, and because of the various limitations of the newspaper medium, news outlets have to make decisions on what to focus their time and resources on. It is clear from the findings that the Rohingya crisis did not receive the same amount of space or level of coverage as the Rwandan genocide. The next

sub-chapters will discuss the findings in relation to news values that guided the news selection, and how the Rwanda and Myanmar conflicts were framed.

6.2 News values and the framing perspective

Which aspects of the conflicts did the newspapers focus on?

The main finding in the previous sub-chapter is that Myanmar received a lower level of prioritization in the three newspapers compared to the Rwandan genocide. This part of the analysis will be focused on what type of themes were the main focus of the reporting and how the two conflicts compare in this regard.

Story focus	Rwanda	Myanmar
Drama/violence ¹⁷²	209	187
Élite nations ¹⁷³	101	27
Norwegian involvement	28	8
Local politics	71	17
Negotiation & condemnation ¹⁷⁴	25	24
Genocide	25	30
Other	55	17

Figure 6.1: Story focus comparison, presented in numbers of articles with the particular focus or frame.

Most of the coverage for both of the conflicts was focused around the drama, violence and human suffering aspect. This is not surprising, because stories about faraway conflicts are more likely to get attention through the dramatization of the events.¹⁷⁵ In other words, conflict tends to be reported as an immediate dispute between two sides that culminates in a dramatic situation. Stalemates or build-up to the dramatic events tend to not get as much attention, as Galtung and Ruge pointed out in *The Structure of Foreign News*.¹⁷⁶ This category covers the abjection that comes with violence and human suffering. Reporting this

¹⁷² This sub-group consists of the categories “violence/military action” and “human suffering/refugee crisis” from the original material.

¹⁷³ This sub-group consists of the categories “European/Western involvement” and “international politics” from the original material.

¹⁷⁴ This sub-group consists of the categories “negotiations about possible resolutions” and “condemnation of the aggressors” from the original material.

¹⁷⁵ Allan, *News Culture* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), 72.

¹⁷⁶ Galtung and Ruge, «The Structure of Foreign News», 66.

aspect of a conflict also provides the press with an opportunity to act as a global watchdog by highlighting human rights abuses. Of 240 articles, themes of violence and human suffering were covered 209 times in the Rwanda dataset, while the two categories were covered 187 times in the 127 articles about Myanmar.¹⁷⁷ Considering the decline in the total number of articles about the Myanmar crisis compared to the Rwandan genocide, the relative focus on drama, violence and human suffering increased considerably.

At the same time, stories relating to élite nations were more prominent during the Rwandan genocide. In the 240 articles reporting the crisis, the newspapers connected it to or framed the conflict in terms of Western or European interests and involvement, and the international geopolitical landscape 101 times. In the case of the Myanmar coverage, this was observed only 27 times in 127 articles. When the plane that carried President Habyarimana was shot down on the 6th of April 1994, it immediately triggered the beginnings of a horrific genocide. But in addition to that, the death of the president meant that the situation immediately received the attention of the international political community. Belgian and United Nations affiliated military forces were already stationed in Kigali, although most were pulled out after ten Belgian soldiers were killed.¹⁷⁸ The situation could not be ignored by Western news media, because of the direct involvement of élite nations from the very beginning of the crisis.

There was nowhere near a similar level of Western presence in Rakhine in August 2017 when the Myanmar Armed Forces assaulted Rohingya villages. In fact, the military blocked NGOs, humanitarian groups, the media and a United Nations investigative group from entering the region.¹⁷⁹ Not only did this hinder an early attempt of intervention, but it also meant that information was very difficult to obtain. Ultimately, the lack of Western presence in Myanmar is the most viable explanation for why the Norwegian press did not frame the conflict from the angle of élite nations and their involvement, in the same way as during the Rwandan genocide. By the same token, the focus on Norwegian involvement also slightly dipped in the coverage of Myanmar. During the process of coding the articles, I

¹⁷⁷ Because the categories “violence/military action” and “human suffering/refugee crisis” were merged into one sub-category in table 6.1, the number of occurrences of this theme is higher than the article count.

¹⁷⁸ BBC News, «Rwanda genocide: 100 days of slaughter».

¹⁷⁹ Beyrer and Kamarulzaman, «Ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: the Rohingya crisis and human rights», 1570.

observed that the main difference was that there were a small number of Norwegian NGO workers in the midst of the refugee crisis in Rwanda who provided the media with their first-hand experiences. Most of the articles that related to Norwegian interests during the Myanmar crisis were themed around the political relationship between Norway and Myanmar, namely through foreign aid policies. It is slightly odd that this frame was not prominent in the coverage, though, given that Norad highlights Myanmar as one of Norway's main countries of focus in their foreign aid and development partnership.¹⁸⁰

Another finding that can be observed in table 6.1 is that the three newspapers focused far less on local politics during their coverage of the Myanmar crisis. In the Rwanda dataset, 71 of 240 articles (29.6%) covered the development of the local political situation, whereas this was the focus of 17 of 127 articles (13.4%) in the Myanmar coverage. Given that there were far more notices and articles produced by agencies relative to the overall genre and authorship figures in the Myanmar coverage compared to Rwanda, it is not surprising that there was also less focus on the local political situation. There are space constraints that prevent such articles from fully delving into nuanced political implications of the situation. This is yet another indication of the increased tabloidization of the press, insofar that short, agency-produced articles have increasingly come to dominate over nuanced, investigative and original conflict reporting.

Moreover, the decline in the coverage of themes like the political situation in Myanmar could also explain the fact that such a large proportion of the Myanmar coverage is centered around drama and violence. Notices and short articles produced by agencies often tend to focus on factually reporting specific events, without necessarily offering much context or including other frames, in a way that a feature article potentially could. Elisabeth Eide writes that short-form notices tend to dominate the news coverage of faraway events. Especially during the first half of the 20th century, the lack of in-depth articles showcased a shortage of resources and a lack of commitment from newspapers to give such news items higher priority. Back then, there was more reliance on the correspondent networks of the agencies, as well as missionaries and aid workers who were in areas where newsworthy events took place.¹⁸¹ It may seem that the reporting of Myanmar reverted back to the reliance

¹⁸⁰ Norad, «Myanmar».

¹⁸¹ Eide, «Inn i det tredje rom: Ensidighet og gjensidighet», 9-28.

on content from agencies, despite the fact that the world is more accessible than ever because of the progress of communication technologies.

Stories that were focused on condemning the aggressors, reported on negotiations to solve the conflicts, and ones that overtly used language that referred to a genocide or ethnic cleansing taking place, were all relatively sparse during both of the crises. However, it is interesting to note that stories with this framing were more prevalent during the Myanmar crisis. The newspapers alluded to, or reported other sources describing the situation in Myanmar as a genocide (or ethnic cleansing) 30 times in the 127 articles (23.6%) To compare this to the Rwanda dataset, this occurred 24 times in 240 articles. This is not surprising given the literature that exists about the failings of the media during the genocide in Rwanda. Perhaps this has set a precedent in foreign conflict reporting for the United Nations and journalists alike to raise suspicion and call out potential genocides more readily.

Image focus	Rwanda	Myanmar
Evocative	56	34
Neutral photographs of victims	27	42
Neutral/descriptive photographs	46	9
Informational visuals	20	5
Military objects/scenarios	26	7
Politicians	6	30

Figure 6.2: Image focus comparison, presented in numbers of articles with the particular focus or frame.

There are a few striking details in table 6.2. Overall, there were far more images that portrayed the victims in a somewhat neutral setting as opposed to the dramatic frame that focuses on their suffering. One thing to keep in mind while reading this data, is that there were overall more images used in the Myanmar coverage compared to Rwanda (relative to the total number of articles). However, this could indicate an evolution in terms of how newspapers represent victims of distant wars. After all, there were eight more articles that focused on the less dramatic portrayal of victims than evocative photographs in the Myanmar data. Military objects and scenarios were only observed in seven images – which makes it one of the least represented categories.

Considering that the vast majority of the stories about the Myanmar crisis were focused on the more dramatic, sensational and evocative aspects of the conflict, it is interesting to observe that the use of evocative imagery went down in comparison with the Rwanda coverage. Photographs can be a powerful framing tool because they directly access the most potent human perceptive sense and capture the attention of the reader in a unique way. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw argues that publishing the typical, evocative image of victims (for example the stereotypical emaciated African child) is detrimental to the sufferers and those who are seeking solutions, because it reinforces stereotypes and draws attention away from the analysis of the actual roots of the conflicts, such as the political and economic situation.¹⁸²

The category that saw the biggest increase from 1994 to 2017 was photographs of politicians, jumping from six in the Rwanda material, to 30 during the coverage of the Myanmar crisis. The data collection process revealed that many of the images of politicians in the Myanmar data were of Aung San Suu Kyi, who was on the receiving end of media scrutiny and denouncements from humanitarian groups for the treatment of the Rohingya people. There is a slight contradiction in the fact that the number of stories relating to local politics decreased in the Myanmar coverage, while the number of images of politicians went up. This could in part be due to many Myanmar articles including photos of politicians, yet at the same time not including a focus on local politics in the text. In other words, the framing was more person-oriented or the article discussed other topics than local politics specifically.

There is, of course, room for a margin of error in the coding process, which could have yielded slightly contradicting numbers for different variables. Nevertheless, Aung San Suu Kyi's unique status as a worldwide public figure played a role in the increased focus on élite people in the Myanmar data, and there is a case to be made for the conflict being slightly more person-focused than Rwanda. According to Stuart Allan, reference to élite people make for more salient news items¹⁸³, something that is backed by Galtung and Ruge. According to them, both personification and reference to élite people increase the probability of a foreign news item to be picked up (see chapter 3.2.1). Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for peacefully fighting to free Burma from a military dictatorship.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, it is natural that the press highlighted the dissonance between her being a symbol of freedom

¹⁸² Shaw, *Human Rights Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 94.

¹⁸³ Allan, *News Culture* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010), 73.

¹⁸⁴ The Nobel Prize, «Aung San Suu Kyi: Facts».

in Myanmar and the mistreatment of the Rohingya under her leadership. Because of the cultural distance to Myanmar for most Norwegians and a general lack of Western framing perspectives, the Norwegian newspapers are likely to have used the unique relationship that Norway has to Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi to make the story more meaningful to the readers. The increased frequency in photographs of politicians appearing in the Myanmar coverage has therefore less to do with reporting the political causes of the crisis, and more to do with a higher focus on a specific elite person.

6.3 The distribution of sources

How does the selection and distribution of sources compare between the two conflicts?

Sources	Rwanda	Myanmar
NGOs	73	27
The United Nations	69	47
International politicians	47	22
Local politicians	35	27
Norwegian politicians	15	8
Foreign correspondents	32	8
None	33	13
Other	55	43
Total¹⁸⁵	326	182

Figure 6.3: The distribution of sources, presented as numbers.

A total number of 326 sources were used in the 240 articles about the Rwandan genocide, which makes the source-to-article ratio article about 1.36. By comparison, 182 sources were found in 127 articles about the Myanmar crisis, which translates into about 1.43 sources per article. This means that in both instances, the mean number of sources per article was just under one and a half. Firstly, this demonstrates that there was almost no difference in terms of the number of sources used between the two conflicts. Secondly, the fact that there were, on average, around 1.4 sources per article, indicates that the newspapers made an effort to represent different sources and to bring forth multiple perspectives on the conflicts. Only

¹⁸⁵ Excluding the category «none».

8.5% and 6.2% of the articles in the Rwanda and Myanmar datasets respectively did not explicitly cite a source for the information. Ideally, this number should be closer to zero, given the stipulations provided by The Ethical Code of Practice for the Norwegian Press.¹⁸⁶ In the large scheme, the fact that over 90% of the articles about both of the conflicts included sources, and in some cases more than one, points to a relatively healthy practice of sourcing in Norwegian foreign conflict reporting.

Overall, the United Nations was the most relied-upon source of information in both sets of data. The UN was cited as a source 47 times in 127 articles about Myanmar, and 69 times in 240 articles in the Rwanda material. Whereas the prominence of the UN as a source slightly increased in the Myanmar coverage, the use of NGOs as sources somewhat decreased. In the 127 articles, NGOs were cited 27 times. In the 240 articles about the Rwandan genocide, NGOs were sourced 73 times. Finally, the use of international politicians as sources stayed at a relatively similar level in both of the conflicts. There were 47 references to international politicians in 240 articles about Rwanda represents, while these types of sources were used 22 times in 127 articles during the Myanmar crisis.

Considering that the Myanmar military for a period of time did not grant access to neither the United Nations, nor human rights groups or the media, it may appear that the UN were a more prominent voice during the coverage of the conflict than NGOs. It was organizations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International who initially brought attention to severe human rights abuses in the Rakhine region, while the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein declared the situation to be a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in September 2017.¹⁸⁷ The main observation here is that the reliance for information from the UN increased at a very similar rate to the decrease of the use of NGOs as sources during the Myanmar crisis compared to the Rwandan genocide.

One explanation for these changes may be that NGOs themselves have shifted their communicative strategies to bypass traditional media, which, according to Cottle is "to ensure that they get their intended message across to their intended audiences without the risk

¹⁸⁶ Pressens Faglige Utvalg, «Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press».

¹⁸⁷ Beyrer and Kamarulzaman, «Ethnic cleansing in Myanmar: the Rohingya crisis and human rights», 1570-1571.

of mediated scandals.”¹⁸⁸ But it is clear that the distribution has moved in a direction where the United Nations became the dominant source of information about the Myanmar crisis in the Norwegian press. The diminished presence of NGOs as a source in this conflict is a worrying sign because it represents a loss of important voices who are in a unique position to share their witnessed experiences, raise awareness, provide emergency relief and advocate for long-term solutions.¹⁸⁹

The main issue with an over-reliance on one giant official governing body like the United Nations is that it finds itself locked in a perpetual state of diplomatic deadlock to appease (or not alienate) all of its member states. Therefore, its agenda has to constantly be questioned by the press. The fact that the UN was represented so much more in the sourcing of Myanmar than for example NGOs is a problematic trend. The findings also show that the reliance on information from international governments (represented by politicians) decreased slightly in the coverage of Myanmar compared to Rwanda. At the same time, local politicians were used as sources at a higher rate. This is not an argument that local politicians are more reliable, in fact it may even be the opposite depending on whose interests they represent. However, this indicates that information from local politicians was given more space during the crisis in Myanmar than in Rwanda, thus diversifying the sourcing. And as the studies about the Rwandan genocide have shown, international politicians are not always a reliable source when it comes to faraway conflicts, which may be the reason why their representation was lower in the Myanmar coverage.

Norwegian politicians were cited at a fairly similarly low rate in both of the conflicts, which is slightly surprising given the ambition of the Norwegian government to be involved in international peacebuilding. Overall, the coverage of both conflicts utilized the framework of Norwegian involvement in a very minimal way, both in the focus and the sourcing of the stories. Considering Galtung and Ruge’s factors influencing the selection of foreign news items, the data suggests that there is not much in the coverage of the Rwandan genocide and the Myanmar crisis that connect them to Norwegian interests or involvement.

Foreign correspondents were also a less prevalent source of information during the Myanmar crisis compared to the Rwandan genocide. This is part of the trending decline of

¹⁸⁸ Cottle, *Global Crisis Reporting* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2009), 163.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 148.

the deployment of foreign correspondents due to the increasing economic strains on journalism.¹⁹⁰ The advantage of having foreign correspondents in faraway locations is that they are able to develop networks of sources, acquire more in-depth knowledge about the region and the situation, and spend meaningful amounts of time reporting on a conflict on the ground. One point of view is that the decline in foreign correspondence means that foreign stories get less attention and are subject to more superficial reporting. However, some scholars argue that traditional foreign correspondents are not as crucial in today's global media landscape. "For these authors, in a world of increasingly porous borders, the lines between foreign and domestic news have become blurred, just as they have in the world of commerce, health, culture and environment."¹⁹¹ It is true that sources and information are more accessible than ever before, but the argument that foreign correspondents are able to provide a more holistic account of a faraway conflict is still valid. Judging by the decline of the deployment of foreign correspondents, the reporting of distant conflicts, human rights abuses and genocides could be further compromised in the future.

6.4 Distant conflict coverage in 2017 versus 1994

The main aim of this thesis was to analyze how distant conflicts were reported in three Norwegian newspapers. The analysis focused on drawing a historical comparison between the coverage of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the Myanmar crisis in 2017. Although not identical, the common aspects that are useful for this thesis are that the conflicts are both geographically and culturally distant from Norwegian news consumers and that extreme, genocidal violence was a major aspect in both cases. Distant wars and humanitarian emergencies have become increasingly important as the world becomes more connected and globalized, because they have direct ramifications for the construction of international norms.¹⁹² This should be especially true for Norway and Norwegian reporting, considering the country's history with negotiating peace treaties, providing foreign aid to developing nations and promoting human rights overseas.

The findings showed that the Myanmar crisis received less coverage than the Rwandan genocide. It had zero front-page appearances and generally took up less column

¹⁹⁰ Cottle: «Journalism and Globalization», 341-357.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Nohrstedt and Ottosen, «Mediatization and Globalisation», 149-164.

space. There was less genre diversity and it was notable that notices dominated as the most common type of story. The coverage of Rwanda had a more even distribution between the various genres, and the authorship of the articles was also quite varied. Much of the Myanmar reporting was produced by news agencies, and far fewer articles were written by journalists and foreign correspondents. As mentioned previously, notices, by and large, represent a more limited and superficial coverage of a news story. This points to the fact that this crisis did not receive the same level of attention by the three news outlets as the Rwandan genocide.

The impact of the varying geopolitical circumstances on the reporting of distant conflicts cannot be ignored as a factor in the drop seen in the coverage of Myanmar compared to Rwanda. The main contrast of the two eras in which these conflicts took place is the level of involvement in warfare and ideological conflicts from Western nation states. The Rwandan genocide exemplifies the “new wars” that began to gain attention of Western media after the Cold War ended. During this time, the threshold to publish news about distant conflicts was lowered as a result of the absence of “our wars”. This was observed in the overall coverage of the Rwandan genocide, which was more plentiful and occupied more space.

Conversely, the relative decline in the coverage of Myanmar is indicative of the dwindling salience of “other people’s wars” in the paradigm of conflict coverage of this era. The events on September 11th, 2001 elevated the perceptions of threat to civil society in Western countries, and consequently the media’s attention gravitated towards the threat of Islamic terrorism and Western warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, conflicts that carry no cultural significance or resonance to Norwegian audiences are likely to receive less coverage in a geopolitical situation where the “us vs. them” style of conflict reporting dominates. The reporting of Rwanda had far more focus on Western involvement than the case was with Myanmar. If a lack of cultural resonance is a barrier for the selection of foreign crises in Western news, as was argued in *The Structure of Foreign News*, then the relative dearth of Western-centric frames could in part explain the overall decline in the coverage of the Rohingya crisis.

Moreover, the broader evolution of newspapers in an ever-changing media landscape is relevant in this discussion. One aspect of this process is the increased tabloidization of the press, which is one of the consequences of the intense competition from digital news

platforms. Klassekampen's shift from broadsheet to the tabloid format is an example of this, as is the overall increase in the use of images in all of the newspapers. The coverage of Myanmar commanded less column space than Rwanda and was reported in a more superficial manner (evident in the disproportionate concentration of notices compared to other genres). This is somewhat indicative of the changes in news selection practices. The process of tabloidization has been linked with an increased focus on drama¹⁹³ (in this case conflict drama, violence and military action). Although, the level of intensity of a conflict has always been a relevant factor in the news selection process of foreign conflicts, the findings have shown an increase in dramatic and evocative framing in the Myanmar coverage.

News selection is also influenced by the newspaper's composition as well as economic considerations in regard to the allocation of resources. The increased reliance on notices and content from news agencies in the coverage of Myanmar exemplifies the economic impact on the modern press. These types of articles are a more cost-effective way for a newspaper to cover a conflict. Furthermore, the fact that fewer foreign correspondents were used in the reporting of Myanmar is another affirmation of this impact and is indicative of a broader trend in the news industry.

A way to raise the cultural significance of a foreign conflict in the context of Norwegian journalism is to connect it with Norwegian matters. In this study, the connection to Norwegian matters was limited. Due to the lack of these kinds of frames, the newspapers relied more on the evocative and dramatic aspects in the coverage of Myanmar. However, it must be noted that the use of evocative images was more prevalent in the coverage of the Rwandan genocide. As images have become a more integral part of newspaper journalism, it is interesting that it is one area of the Myanmar coverage that differs so significantly from the coverage of Rwanda. On one hand, violence and drama was a more prominent theme in the articles about Myanmar. At the same time there was also more focus on resolution-seeking journalism, more emphasis on reporting public condemnations and making references to genocidal conditions in the Rakhine region. Mentions of élite nations went down considerably, as did the use of evocative images. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw writes that the media can play a decisive role in conflict reporting, but that the way the reporting is approached can produce either positive or negative outcomes:

¹⁹³ Allern, *Nyhetsverdier* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001), 31.

“Looking at the evolution of the news media as a channel of communication, it is clear that all the accounts of the last five decades agree that distorted or bad communication can produce rather than manage conflict. Distorted communication is bound to be produced when journalists employ human wrongs journalism (evocative, empathy distance frames) instead of human rights journalism (diagnostic, empathy critical frames).”¹⁹⁴

Shaw is quite scathing about evocative reporting, which focuses overtly on suffering frames and images to draw empathy from the readers, with the ultimate goal of gathering financial support for relief efforts. Although mobilizing support in the form of relief action or military intervention can be crucial in the short-term, the drawback of this approach is that the political aspects of a distant conflict take a backseat on the agenda. Evocative reporting, according to Shaw, distracts the public from the political dimension of humanitarian crises, which leads to less analysis of their causes. And without analyzing the causes of a conflict, the road to long-term solutions becomes longer and rockier.¹⁹⁵ From this perspective, the Myanmar coverage was less evocative, both in its visual and textual framing. The more difficult question is whether or not a less evocative approach to reporting is enough to weigh up for the relative decline in the prioritization of this conflict. Admittedly, the reporting of the genocide in Rwanda in Western news is a documented example of the need for precise, critical and timely reporting when such dire conflicts break out. The overwhelming focus on the refugee crisis compared to the genocide itself, as well as the evocative frames that were a major element of the coverage, are largely the reasons for why the Western media’s role in Rwanda is viewed in such a negative way by scholars and journalists.

The Norwegian press has been subject to more and more tabloidization in recent years. The data appears to support this claim and the increase in the use of images and more sensationalist coverage are a testament to this. Perhaps the lowering of the priority of the Myanmar crisis suggests that distant conflicts are generally losing salience in the media today, although a more comprehensive comparative content analysis of newspapers is needed to substantiate this. There are glimmers of hope of more critical coverage, seen in the rise of public condemnation of the aggression and the slight decrease in the reliance on international politicians as sources of information during the Myanmar crisis.

¹⁹⁴ Shaw, *Human Rights Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 124.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

There is, however, a lot to be desired in the coverage of Myanmar, namely more abundant and comprehensive reporting. Allocating more resources to independently research and report distant crises would improve the overall quality of the coverage. It would also signal to readers that the story is significant and worthy of their attention. Adequately informing the public goes hand-in-hand with mobilizing support for the cause and demanding an end to the persecution of minorities such as the Rohingya people.

7 Conclusion and reflections

The theme of this thesis is distant conflict reporting in the Norwegian press. The overall purpose was to draw a historical comparison between the coverage of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the 2017 Rohingya crisis. A quantitative content analysis was utilized to collect data from articles about these crises in three national daily newspapers: *Dagbladet*, *Klassekampen* and *Verdens Gang*. The main research question was: *How was the Myanmar crisis of 2017 covered by Dagbladet, Klassekampen and Verdens Gang compared to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda?* The previous chapter discussed the findings with this and the supplementary questions in mind. The analysis revealed that the Myanmar crisis received substantially less coverage in the three newspapers than the Rwandan genocide. This study has argued that the global geopolitics play a large role in foreign conflict reporting in Western news. Another factor in this is the changing landscape of the news media, and how the evolution of the newspaper has impacted the reporting of such crises. This chapter will summarize the main takeaways from the discussion, highlight the broader relevance of this research and point out its limitations.

The Rwandan genocide was a crisis that was perhaps easier to frame in the context of the immediate post-Cold War landscape of foreign conflicts. In this geopolitical paradigm, Western nations were not directly involved in ideological warfare overseas. This allowed foreign conflicts to receive more attention from Western media. Simply put, the lack of “our wars” opened the door for Western media to cover “other people’s wars”. Distant conflicts and humanitarian crises did not cease to exist in the collective consciousness of Norwegian news landscape in 2017, but it is also fair to say that the conflict in Myanmar could have been pushed to the side because it does not line up with our expectations of conflict reporting in the age of the War on Terror. In other words, there was nothing to anchor the conflict to the immediate threat of terrorism to European nations or the geopolitical interests of Western nations involved in overseas wars, all of which has been a large part of the focus of conflict reporting in the last 20 years.¹⁹⁶

The fact that the Rwandan genocide received so much more coverage than Myanmar can be partly explained by the existing French and Belgian presence in the region. Because of

¹⁹⁶ Cottle, *Global Crisis Reporting* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2009), 114-116.

this, the media had a way to directly connect the conflict to the involvement of these troops, who were initially deployed to rescue Europeans that found themselves in the midst of the drama and instability in Rwanda. This is an effective way to frame the conflict in a more meaningful way for Norwegian readers, as it relates to the cultural or psychological closeness factor of the traditional news values. This kind of framing is resonant because the average reader is more likely to connect with a story when people that share a similar cultural background are involved. The conflict also caught immediate international attention due to the fact that the plane carrying the Rwandan president was shot down, which rapidly triggered the massacres. There was immediate, documented and continuous intensity and drama that undoubtedly ticked many of the news values at the same time.

The main contrast in the coverage of the two conflicts is that there were far fewer articles reporting the 2017 Rohingya crisis than the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The findings indicate that Myanmar was not as highly prioritized on the agenda as Rwanda. There was less genre diversity, and notices and short articles produced by news agencies particularly dominated the coverage. In addition, the Myanmar crisis covered less column space and did not appear on the front pages once, whereas Rwanda was featured on the cover 16 times. Thus, Myanmar was less visible in the overall composition of the newspapers. Part of the explanation is that newspapers have adjusted and modernized their format and layout, as is evident from the increased use of images and photographs in the coverage of the Myanmar crisis. But there is no escaping the fact that the increased prevalence of notices has a direct correlation with the decrease in the amount of column space afforded to Myanmar overall.

In a standalone case study such as this, the main takeaways were that many different factors affect the newspaper coverage of distant conflicts. The individuality and uniqueness of the conflict in terms of its intensity, drama and resonance will always be considered as criteria for newsworthiness. In addition, there is the ever-changing state of the newspaper medium and the overall media landscape to contend with. The financial pressures placed on news outlets and the competition from online journalism has had an impact on the press. For example, increasing tabloidization has been used as a means to keep up with the competition from other media. This has had consequences for the content of newspapers, as well as the layout and composition. An important finding illustrating this was the increased prevalence of the notice and content produced by news agencies in the reporting of the Myanmar crisis.

Overall, the coverage of the Rwandan genocide appeared to be more comprehensive, more genre diverse and exhibited a larger number of elements that indicated original reporting.

Foreign conflict reporting does not necessarily have to make compromises when it comes to the balance of *how much coverage* a conflict receives and *how* it is reported. It should be possible to make a distant conflict like the Rwandan genocide or the Rohingya crisis a visible priority, *and* cover it in a meaningful, informative and responsible way. However, this case study highlights that the Norwegian press did not quite strike the right balance. The coverage of Rwanda was plentiful but focused quite heavily on violence and human suffering. Evocative photographs dominated the visual disposition of the coverage. It has been argued that over-emphasizing drama and suffering can have a detrimental effect by diverting focus from the underlying political and economic causes of a crisis. There was also more focus on élite nations and people, both from a framing perspective and in the selection of sources.

Myanmar, on the other hand, was covered in much fewer articles. On top of that, there were far less in-depth pieces written about Myanmar compared to the Rwanda coverage. The textual focus of the stories had a much higher concentration towards drama, violence and human suffering than in the reporting of the Rwandan genocide. Interestingly, the visual framing became far less evocative. In addition, there was more focus on reporting condemnation and highlighting the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya. There could be a connection between the high number of notices and the increased focus on drama and violence at the expense of other themes in the Myanmar coverage. The spatial constraints of the notice could limit the number of aspects of a crisis that can relayed. However, a more comprehensive content analysis of the entire content of the newspaper is needed to fully investigate this claim.

Very little of the coverage of Myanmar was focused on élite nations and European or Western involvement compared to the Rwandan genocide. On one hand, humanitarian crises deserve Western media attention regardless of the level of Western involvement or whether or not the conflict has implications for élite nations. On the other hand, the literature around foreign conflicts, news selection and framing states that distant crises generally need to have some cultural resonance with the citizens of the country in which it is being reported. Therefore, the lack of framing focusing on Western involvement or international politics in

regard to the Myanmar crisis could have had an impact on the relative decline in the coverage compared to the Rwandan genocide.

Martin Shaw argued that foreign conflict reporting in the 1990's was still guided by narratives and notions of national interests that developed over decades of ideological wars and conflicts: "Consequently new conflicts and challenges are interpreted in terms of concepts of nations and international order inherited from the past."¹⁹⁷ The findings in this thesis show that these notions reverberate in the contemporary coverage of distant conflicts in Norwegian newspapers. In fact, there is a case to be made that it is even more challenging to put distant conflicts like Myanmar on the agenda today, because they do not fit into the narrative of the War on Terror. Prior to this, the absence of a conflict paradigm that reinforces Western interests in the media opened the door for more coverage of "new" distant crises like the Rwandan genocide. However, the reporting was substantially more Western-centric than in the case of Myanmar, which shows that the leftover Western hegemonic notions influenced the coverage of Rwanda to a certain extent.

This research project focused on identifying how much coverage was allotted to the 2017 Myanmar crisis in comparison with the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It was certainly useful in exploring how the coverage of such crises has changed in those 23 years, and what underlying mechanisms that are behind the changes. One of the limitations of this approach is that it did not consider how these crises compare in the overall news agendas of the newspapers in their respective time periods. Although more time consuming, conducting a content analysis that compares the entirety of a newspaper's output can add more depth to the analysis of agenda-setting. While some of the analysis also focused on framing, a quantitative content analysis can only be used to analyze this up to a certain point. In the case of this thesis, the strict categorical classifications restricted the framing analysis. Further qualitative analyses of selected articles could shed some light on the deeper nuances in the coverage. It could be possible to identify the themes of each article more precisely, for example which aspects of the local political situation were discussed or reported, and which were left out. A similar approach could be of use for a more multi-layered analysis of images. Finally, a discourse analysis could potentially be used for studying the portrayal of the victims, or how political figures communicate about these crises. Journalism plays a major role in setting

¹⁹⁷ Shaw, *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1996), 182.

international norms and promoting human rights. This is a valuable area of research and there are certainly many possibilities for further research.

There have been many case studies, research papers and dissertations written about the relationship between the media and war, with a particularly increased focus on terrorism in recent years. The scope of this thesis was purposefully focused on crises that fall outside of the Western hegemonic geopolitical narrative that dominates contemporary conflict reporting. I hope to have made an incremental contribution to the literature surrounding Norwegian media coverage of humanitarian crises and distant conflicts. The data revealed many interesting findings but was also very time-consuming to collect and code. Therefore, I decided to focus the attention on highlighting the trends in the reporting. I believe that the methodology matched the overall purpose of this research project. I have gained valuable knowledge about Norwegian newspaper coverage of foreign conflicts, in particular how external factors such as the global political situation and the prevailing media landscape can influence the selection and reporting of a distant crisis.

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Appendix

The codebook.

Variable name	Position	Variable label	Value	Value label
		Story identification		
ids	1	number		
dd	2	Date (day)		
dm	3	Date (month)		
page	4	Page number		
frnt_pg	5	Front page?	1	Yes
			2	No
np	6	News outlet	1	Dagbladet
			2	Klassekampen
			3	Verdens Gang
author	7	Story author	1	No author
			2	Journalist
			3	Foreign correspondent
			4	Politician
			5	Non-journalist
			6	News agency
genre	8	Story genre	1	News report
			2	Notice
			3	Feature
			4	Op-ed
			5	Editorial
			6	Other
space	9	Column space	1	Up to a ¼ of the page
			2	Up to ½ of the page
			3	Up to ¾ of the page
			4	More than ¾ of the page
img	10	How many images	1	None
			2	One
			3	Two
			4	Three or more
sources1	11	Sources used	0-1	Local sources
sources2	12		0-1	Foreign correspondents
sources3	13		0-1	Local politicians
sources4	14		0-1	Norwegian politicians
sources5	15		0-1	Foreign politicians
sources6	16		0-1	NGOs
sources7	17		0-1	The UN
sources8	18		0-1	Other
sources9	19		0-1	None

focus1	20	0-1	Violence and/or military action
focus2	21	0-1	Human suffering and/or refugee crisis
focus3	22	0-1	Norwegian involvement
focus4	23	0-1	European/Western involvement
focus5	24	0-1	Local politics
focus6	25	0-1	International politics
focus7	26	0-1	Negotiation about possible resolutions
focus8	27	0-1	Condemnations of the aggressors
focus9	28	0-1	Genocide
focus10	29	0-1	Other
img_foc1	30	0-1	No image
img_foc2	31	0-1	Informational visuals
img_foc3	32	0-1	Evocative photographs
img_foc4	33	0-1	Neutral photographs of victims
img_foc5	34	0-1	Neutral/descriptive photographs and visuals
img_foc6	35	0-1	Photographs or visuals of military objects and/or scenarios
img_foc7	36	0-1	Photographs of politicians