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**Nation and manipulation: Post-war media
scene in the countries of the former
Yugoslavia**

Master thesis

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Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that I compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

I hereby declare that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

I hereby declare that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague 01.08.2023.

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Abstract

This study focuses on the media narratives on social dynamics and reconciliation in the media of former Yugoslav countries, Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than two decades after the end of wars. The research focuses on the presence of divisive narratives, such as offensive language, bias and sensationalism, elements of national stereotypization, hate speech, and commitment to impartial journalism in current media practices. The historical background of media control and manipulation in Yugoslavia, from the Tito era to nationalist narratives during the Yugoslav wars, forms a significant part of the research context. The study aims to shed light on critical aspects of media reporting, setting the stage for future research into the broader political and economic issues affecting the media landscape in these countries.

Abstrakt

Tato studie se zaměřuje na mediální narativy o sociální dynamice a usmíření v médiích zemí bývalé Jugoslávie, Srbska, Chorvatska a Bosny a Hercegoviny, více než dvě desetiletí po skončení válek. Výzkum se zaměřuje na přítomnost rozdělovajících narativů, jako je urážlivý jazyk, zaujatost a senzacechtivost, prvky národní stereotypizace, nenávistné projevy a oddanost nestranné žurnalistice v současných mediálních praktikách. Významnou část výzkumného kontextu tvoří historické pozadí mediální kontroly a manipulace v Jugoslávii, od Titovy éry po nacionalistické narativy během jugoslávských válek. Cílem studie je osvětlit kritické aspekty mediálního zpravodajství a připravit půdu pro budoucí výzkum širších politických a ekonomických problémů ovlivňujících mediální krajinu v těchto zemích.

Keywords

media, war, Yugoslavia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina

Klíčová slova

média, válka, Jugoslávie, Srbsko, Chorvatsko, Bosna a Hercegovina

Název práce

Národ a manipulace: Poválečná mediální scéna v zemích bývalé Jugoslávie

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I. Introduction

The war which took place in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001 has left an indelible mark on the Balkan region. The immediate physical consequences of the war may have been rehabilitated, but the social, psychological, and cultural scars persist, making the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding an ongoing struggle. The role of the media in this struggle cannot be understated. Media organizations, as a primary means of information dissemination, have the power to shape perceptions, influence public opinion, and play a part in the construction or deconstruction of the social fabric. This research will deal with the media landscape of the former Yugoslav republics of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on the quality and integrity of media reporting and its role in the post-conflict societal dynamics.

In post-war societies it is especially important to establish clear regulations around media coverage of nations, ethnic groups, disputes, and war crimes. The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the role of the media in shaping social dynamics and encouraging reconciliation in post-conflict societies, especially in the context of the former Yugoslav republics. By exploring the war rhetoric in the contemporary media landscape of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this study offers valuable insight into the media's influence on conflict resolution and the perpetuation of existing disputes.

My research objectives are to examine the presence of war rhetoric in the commercial media and the public broadcasters of the former Yugoslav states. The focus of the study will be on observing divisive narratives, such as representation of chauvinism, hate speech, sensationalism and commitment to unbiased journalism. Moreover, the study focuses on the crucial aspect of professional standards and ethical considerations of

journalism. Upholding the principles of accuracy, fairness, impartiality, and the values embedded in the democratic society forms the backbone of this research, laying a groundwork to scrutinize the media conduct in the Balkans.

My study comprises a comprehensive literature review, which is an integral aspect of my research. Initially, I will demarcate key concepts relevant for my thesis, such as nationalism, its negative manifestations, and its specific expressions in the Balkan region during the 90s. Subsequently, I will outline the historical context, spanning from the era of Tito to the present day, which will facilitate an understanding of the political climate that had an important impact on the media landscape in the region. Furthermore, I will elucidate the concept of sensationalism and the media framing theory, with a particular focus on Robert M. Entman's framework, which will underpin my methodology. Following the theoretical exposition, I will introduce the research methodology employed, and subsequently disclose the results derived from this analysis.

II. Literature review

Nationalism

The study of nationalism abounds in various definitions of this phenomenon. As an important subject of my research, my primary task will be to understand its characterization by eminent scholars in this field and examine its manifestation in the Balkans. My literature analysis will begin by examining seminal contributions to the study of nationalism.

According to modernist approaches, the nation and nationalism emerged in the last few centuries as a result of modern processes such as capitalism and industrialization. (Gellner, 1983). British-Czech philosopher and social anthropologist, Ernest Gellner approached the subject from a historical perspective. He defined nationalism as a socio-cultural by-product of industrialization, and argued that it is fundamentally a political principle that insists on the alignment of political and national units. Gellner argued that as societies underwent political and economic transformations, the popularization of education became closely linked to the unification of language. This, in turn, contributed to the rise of national identities.

British historical sociologist, Anthony D. Smith, one of the founders of ethnosymbolism, considered nationalism an ideological movement, with an emphasis on the role of pre-existing ethnic communities and symbols in the formation of nations and nationalism. His teachings on nationalism are based on ethnicity and the idea that all nations have dominant 'ethnic cores' (Smith, 1991).

Smith (1991) distinguishes between 'civic' and 'ethnic' types of nationalism. He defines a nation similarly to ethnicity - that it is a human community that inhabits a homeland and shares common myths of origin, shared history and culture, and obligations among all its members.

Smith's concept of a nation-state offers insight into the nationalist narratives during the war in Yugoslavia.

In his book, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Smith (1979) uses the term 'nation-state' to refer to a country whose population consists of only one ethnic and cultural group (a group sharing a common culture, language, history, etc.), and the borders of the country match the boundaries of that specific group. In his book, he argues that when a state becomes deeply embedded in the minds of its citizens as the primary defense against external threats and internal divisions, and when it becomes strongly associated with the nation's history and territory, it transforms into what he calls a "nation-state." In this context, a nation state is the result of a strong bond between the state, its citizens, their shared history, and the territorial boundaries they inhabit.

David Bruce Macdonald (2002) in his book *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian victim cantered propaganda and the war in Yugoslavia*, argues that the conflicts in Yugoslavia were fuelled by competing nationalistic aspirations and claims to territory. Different ethnic and cultural groups sought to establish their own nation-states based on the perceived congruence between their identity and the political borders. The nationalist sentiments were instrumental in mobilizing support and fostering a sense of belonging among the respective communities (MacDonald, 2002).

Furthermore, Smith's notion of bureaucratic nationalism provides an understanding of how the state apparatus plays a significant role in shaping and promoting national identity during the Yugoslav wars. Bureaucratic nationalism, according to Anthony D.

Smith (1979), refers to a form of nationalism that emerges within the bureaucratic apparatus of a state. He argues that bureaucratic nationalism occurs when the state apparatus plays a significant role in shaping and promoting a sense of national identity among its citizens. Bureaucratic nationalism often aims to create a sense of loyalty and allegiance to the state and its institutions, contributing to the formation and maintenance of a national identity among the population (Smith, 1979).

In the former Yugoslavia, the state-controlled media, educational institutions, and cultural policies were employed to propagate and reinforce specific nationalist narratives (Kurspahic, 2003). This claim aligns with the aforementioned Smith's notion of bureaucratic nationalism, which facilitated the construction of a unified national identity within each ethnic group and fostered loyalty and allegiance to the state institutions.

Petar Korunic (2000) in his writing "The Phenomenon of the Nation: Origin, Integration and Development," using the teachings of authors Šidak, Stančić, Banac and various others, defines the concept of nationalism as national consciousness or a feeling that motivates the actions of people in real areas of public life in the right of development and maintenance of a nation, as well as excessive emphasis on the rights, aspirations and values of one's own nation, often at the expense of other ethnic groups, ethnic communities, peoples and nations. He speaks about aggressive nationalism and the negative form of nationalism, which he posits as the opposite of patriotism (positive nationalism). Korunic argues that a positive form of nationalism can be useful, and on the other hand, aggressive nationalism harms the development of the nation. He states that the negative form of nationalism abounds in national monisms - 'one leader', 'one opinion', 'one mind', 'one ideological system' which are characteristic of totalitarian societies.

Gellner (1983) argues that nationalism is a relatively recent development in human history, primarily emerging in the modern era. He divides history into three phases to explain this perspective. In the first phase, people relied on hunting for survival and there was no need for a state or a nation because their primary concern was meeting their basic survival needs. In the second phase the agrarian era, rulers did not need cultural dominance over their subject because there were significant cultural differences between the upper and lower social classes. The ruling class focused more on maintaining its power and agricultural production than on establishing cultural unity. However, in the modern industrial era, the need for cultural standardization and a sense of national identity emerged. This change was driven by changing socio-economic environment, where education became increasingly important. In modern times, individuals no longer identify primarily with a monarch or religion, but feel loyal to a culture that the state is meant to protect. In this context, education plays a key role in shaping modern individual's identification with his nation (Gellner, 1983).

Nationalism in the Balkans

When discussing the conflicts in the '90s in Yugoslavia, it is crucial to explore how the concept of ethnic and national identity are manifested and understood within the former republics.

According to Mihelj (2011), the nationalism that gained momentum in the West was mainly perceived as "civilian", inclusive and democratic, while that in the East was often associated with ethnic conflicts, exclusionary and violent. Ethnic diversity in Western European countries was mainly reduced to local and regional diversity and as such could be kept within the borders of the state. This refers to minorities which do not have a "homeland" somewhere else, but their homeland is the state where they live in.

In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, most minorities are not limited to regional or local units, but extend beyond national borders and are often considered to "belong" to one of the neighbouring countries (examples are the Serbian minority living in Croatia). This type of relationship between the "host" state and the "homeland," Mihelj (2011) called the "triadic nexus" which is important for understanding the nature of the conflict between the Balkan states. According to him, triad nexus is reflected in the fact that the home state tries to intervene in the internal politics of its neighbouring state, in order to protect the rights of members of the minority it represents. This is particularly visible in the way mass media targeted minority populations from their "home" country.

One can speculate about what are the exact reasons for the break of Yugoslavia. The three reasons proposed by Rabrenovic (1997) are the main points of discussion when it comes to the split. Firstly, the biggest problem which gave birth to other ones, was the economic recession of the 1985 which caused enormous dissatisfaction and mistrust in the state, the latter being the second reason for the split. As Rabrenovic noted, after the League of Communists of Yugoslavia lost power and prestige, the parties which gained power in the early 1990s were of a nationalist orientation, glorifying the ethnic uniqueness of their ethnic group. New parties in power have determined the way of success in the states of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. What determined an individual's success was belonging to a certain ethnic group and loyalty to the party. In such environment, all ethnic groups faced discrimination. Nationalism gave politicians the opportunity to climb the ladder and in turn divide the people into "we" who are victims and "they" who oppress us. After the leading parties adopted such an ideology, the media followed. This brings us to the final reason for splitting according to Rabrenovic that the mass communication contributed to the proliferation of propaganda. The media war preceded the war on the battlefield. Public services in

Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia (television, radio and newspapers in Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana) showed false images of the suffering of "their own" nation only, and built support for secession or for violent solutions to the conflict (Rabrenovic, 1997).

Denitch (1993) proposed that the media imposed an information blockade on the citizens. According to him, the press, radio and television were big xenophobia nationalist leaders and under the influence of direct and indirect censorship and domination of the ruling parties.

Negative nationalism

Nationalism is a broad notion and it is important to define it with respect to this topic. The explanations offered by the authors Dallago and Uvalic (1998), focus on the economic aspects of nationalism and are closely related to the type of nationalism which will be the topic of my thesis. They identify two ways of investment in nationality: productive and distributive. The first, as the word itself says, refers to productive nationalism, which means investing in nationality for the purpose of social integration, building a national state and national unification. Distributive nationalism refers to giving advantage to one national, ethnic group at the expense of other groups or the rest of a multinational society. Such ideology, contributes to disintegration and prevents the improvement of the state economy (Dallago, Uvalic. 1998).

For my research, it is important to define the negative form of nationalism, which Blanka Dizdarevic (2012) talks about in "Controversies about the relationship between nationalism and patriotism." Dizdarevic defines negative nationalism as a form of national consciousness which gives emphasis on the differences between one's own nation and other nations, and presents one's own nation as superior to others. According to her, nationalism as a negative phenomenon is a political project of the national elite,

which imposes its specific interests as the "general interests" of the nation, puts national interests first and warns of dangers to national sovereignty and the national state. This manifestation of nationalism, according to Dizdarevic, justifies the actions of the national elite and leaders, and mobilizes national forces against imaginary enemies, be it external or internal. Negative nationalism can be recognized by the fact that nationalists justify the actions of their own nation while condemning the same or even less significant actions of another. Grasping this concept of nationalism is important for understanding the historical background of the nations of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Background and context

Prior to investigating the contemporary media situation, it is important to reflect on the historical context of the media in Yugoslavia. In doing so, I will use the relevant literature on this matter, encompassing the scholarly contributions and their critical appraisal.

The media crisis in the former Yugoslavia has its roots in the era of Josip Broz Tito, when it was heavily controlled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Kurspahic, 2003). As Kemal Kurspahic (2003) noted in his book, *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace*, the legacy of media censorship, fear, and political interference during Tito's era set a precedent for subsequent ownership changes, where different political factions took control while maintaining the same patterns of manipulation and control. Macdonald (2002) characterizes the period of the 90s in Yugoslavia as full of censorship, fear, self-censorship, purges, warmongering and various complaints from the state leadership among other things (MacDonald, 2002). Furthermore, Marjan

Malešić in his book *Peace support operations, mass media, and the public in former Yugoslavia* claims that the mass media in Yugoslav republics "completely accomplished the role of political propaganda and warmongering given them by the politicians" (Malesic, 2000, p. 26).

During the Yugoslav wars, Serbian and Croatian media engaged in the creation and production of news stories which many authors believe it caused the inciting of ethnic hatred among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks (Pejic, 1998; Malesic, 2000; Kurspahic, 2003). In his book, Kurspahic (2003) reflects on the beginnings of the war and the media propaganda of that time. He notes that the Serbian media played a pivotal role in elevating Slobodan Milosevic to a position of prominence, thereby facilitating his electoral victory, while simultaneously glorifying his persona and actions, akin to their previous glorification of Josip Broz Tito (Kurspahic, 2003).

The early period of the Balkan conflict was marked by what Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulic (1993) described as a "media war" (p. 131). In her book *Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War*, Drakulic observed that even before the outbreak of actual warfare, Serbian and Croatian journalists engaged in relentless attacks on political leaders from the opposing republics and on each other (Drakulic, 1993).

Nenad Pejic (1998) stated that the war in Yugoslavia started within the TV stations of the six republics of Yugoslavia (Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia) which were producing one-sided news. Furthermore, he makes a prominent statement: "Conflict has become a way of governing, and ethnicity the method and the most important point of media manipulation. Instead of presentation of this conflict as a conflict between democracy and dictatorship, media presented it as a conflict between ethnic groups" (Pejic, 1998, p. 10). The authors believe that deliberate

construction of news stories concerning the conflicts, further exacerbated tensions and contributed to the fragmentation of society. According to Kurspahic (2003), as Serbian and Croatian media deliberately disseminated biased narratives to fuel ethnic animosity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, this has led to emergence of extreme Muslim media outlets. Additionally, he states that "one nationalism perfectly encouraged another" (Kurspahic, 2003, p. 76).

Beginnings of ethnical divisions

MacDonald (2002) shows that any form of expression of nationalism and religion was suppressed during the communist regime in Yugoslavia. Tito tried to limit the expression of individual identity and belonging of different ethnic groups in the multi-cultural Yugoslavia.

In the text "Socialist Serbia's Narratives: From Yugoslavia to Greater Serbia," Guzina (2003) explains why there was never a strong sense of Yugoslav identity to begin with. He believes that there has never actually been a strong identification with Yugoslav national identity because, firstly, there was never enough cultural and political imagination on the part of the ruling structures to imagine such a construct, and secondly because of "particularist discourses which always dominated supranational imaginations in the former Yugoslavia" (Guzina, 2003, p. 92). Furthermore, he explains the emergence of Serbian populism after the student demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981. According to Guzina, demonstrations by Kosovo Albanians were a response to poor economic and social conditions in the poorest province of Yugoslavia. The main slogans used at these demonstrations were ethnic in nature and advocated the 'Republic of Kosovo.' The Serbian leaders and nationalist intellectuals feared that the Albanian national minority would be elevated to the status of a nation, which could potentially

motivate them to separate from Yugoslavia (Guzina, 2003). This went against the policy of Yugoslavia as one multi-ethnic state.

Around this time, Serbian politicians and nationalist leaders began devising a strategy on how to create anti-Albanian sentiment within the state. Rogel (2003) gives two examples of how two stories, in the 1980s, were used in the media as a way to stir up animosity against Albanians. The first one was a story about a Serbian farmer in Kosovo named Martinovic who claimed he had been sexually assaulted by two Albanians. However, many people believe this not to be true. The second story happened in 1987, when an Albanian army recruit killed four people in Paracin, one being of Serb nationality. The media took the incident to extremes and labelled it as "massacre in Paracin." (Rogel, 2003, p. 168)

Pejic (2020) argued that these type of media-hyped events were enough to spur up the hatred among the ethnic groups.

According to Irina Ognyanova (2000), the animosity towards Croats came from the Second World War and the Independent State of Croatia (ISC). This entity was under the supervision and control of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy during World War II and is responsible for the crimes and genocide committed against the Serbian population in various concentration camps, among which Jasenovac was the largest. The government of ISC is often referred to the 'Ustasha government' or simply 'Ustasha' to describe Croatian nationalist. As the author, claims, the fact that the Ustasha government aimed to banish the Serbs from the country while killing them, has been used by Serbian anti-Croatian propaganda as "proof of Croatia's genocidal nature and pro-fascist orientation" (Ognyanova, 2000, p. 1).

Serbian regime in the 90s brought up the controversy of Jasenovac concentration camp in which Serbs, Jews and Romani died during 1941 to 1945 (Wilmer, 1997). The controversy of this concentration camp lies in the fact that there are many authors who claim different numbers when it comes to deaths in Jasenovac. Some authors believe to be less than 100,000 (Denitch, 1994), or, around 100,000 (Pavlowitch, 2008), while others claim it was around 750,000 (Hall, 1994) or total in ISC from 500,000 to 700,000 (Dragnitch,1992). As MacDonald (2002) states, maintaining the high number of victims in Jasenovac (from 700,000 to one million) is crucial to Serbian national self-identity, and on the other hand, Croatians nationalist, aiming to protect its national pride, claim the figure of 50.000 to reduce the significance of Jasenovac as just one of the death camps during the Second World War. Today, the Jasenovac Memorial Site (2020) states that 80,000 to 100,000 people died in the camp.

While the term Ustasha is a pejorative term for a Croatian nationalist, the term Chetnik binds to the Serbian nationalist. 'Chetnik' was used to denote members of the Serbian nationalist-chauvinist movement who advocated for the territorial expansion of Serbia and the construction of the so-called Greater Serbia, which would include the area of Yugoslavia where people of Serbian ethnic origin live, this included part of land which belonged to Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Croatia (Sobolevski, 1995). The term Chetnik is usually associated with Greater Serbian aggression and violence against the Croatian population and members of certain Croatian national parties, as well as the killing of Croats. Understanding these ideologies and labels is important for the analysis of contemporary media articles. In my research, I try to identify the instances of intolerant language that include the mentioned adjectives.

The document from 1986 called Memorandum, by the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU), is, according to Guzina (2003), the embodiment of xenophobic Serbian

nationalism. This document raised three main problems that Serbia faced in Yugoslavia. The first refers to the fact that Serbia was drastically behind Slovenia and Croatia in economic terms. The second concerned the unresolved constitutional issue of provinces that were independent within the state and should belong to Serbia (Vojvodina and Kosovo). And the third question that it touched on was the bad position of the Kosovo Serbs who are increasingly leaving Kosovo, in which context the word 'genocide' was used against the Serbs in Kosovo. (Guzina, 2003)

In this context, it is worth mentioning the term serbophobia, introduced by Dobrica Cosic, which is anti-Semitism directed towards Serbs, positioning them as victims throughout history. He views Serbophobia as a political phenomenon with the same ideological motivation and intensity as anti-Semitism during the Nazi era (MacDonald, 2002). MacDonald (2002), argues that negative myths of identification are the most influential in mobilizing people under a common cause, in this case - the defense of the nation against external threats. I agree with his idea that such myths instill a sense of danger among members of a nation, as they feel obliged to adhere to the prescriptions set by their leaders in order to defend themselves against the threat. Both MacDonald and Guzina (2003) argued that Memorandum influences the impetus of Serbian nationalism. Strong propaganda campaigns which spread the fear of genocide, justify any military intervention and state-orchestrated action for 'peace'. It is argued that such campaigns preceded much of the irredentist policies and ethnic cleansing in the Yugoslav region (MacDonald, 2002). While Serbian nationalism initially emerged in response to Kosovar Albanian demands for autonomy, Croatian nationalism was heavily influenced by Milosevic's expansionist strategies (MacDonald, 2002).

According to MacDonald (2002), what led to spread of Croatian nationalism in the 90s is the fact that Croats felt like their unique culture, language, and religion were being

threatened and overshadowed within Yugoslavia. The 1960s marked a period of decentralization and liberalization in Yugoslavia, providing an opportunity for a new generation of Croatian Communists to push for increased autonomy from the federal centre. This movement, known as Maspok, demanded greater national rights within the federation, highlighting the under-representation of Croats in their own republic, with Serbs holding a disproportionate number of Party posts, police positions, secret police positions, and INA posts. The author also mentions that Croats were being politically dominated by others and wanted to assert their own identity and protect their culture, language, and religion.

Kurspahic (2003) indicates that Croatian nationalism was escalating in the media, painting the former president, Franjo Tudjman as a patriotic figurehead. He suggests that all media entities were expected to acknowledge and respect the power and ownership wielded by Tudjman and his party, HDZ. Any dissent or opposition to his nationalist ideology was deemed as betrayal to the nation. The author further highlights that the Serbian and Croatian media were involved in spreading news that seemed to fuel ethnic and religious animosity in Bosnia. He suggests that such tactics further aggravated the already tense situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most ethnically diverse republic of Yugoslavia, creating a hostile environment.

Media in the war

Brankovic (1998) studied the period of 1990 and 1991, when the communist regime dominated the Serbian media. At that time, there were only state radio and television stations in Serbia: Studio B, the Belgrade TV station; radio B92, and Borba, a daily newspaper with a small audience. Encouraged by the victory in the elections due to adequate media support, the Socialist Party continued and strengthened its influence on the media, Public dissatisfaction with the media resulted in mass demonstrations in

Belgrade on March 9, 1991, when several hundred thousand people, revolted by media reporting, protested in front of the state television building (Brankovic, 1998). After this event, the government was pressured to carry out changes. As a result, in 1991 the director of state television and the minister of police were dismissed, and independent stations were allowed to broadcast. According to Brankovic (1998), the changes signalled some kind of liberalization of the state media, but this was only a mere apparition. He claims that in the fall of the same year, 1991, the period of the war propaganda in the Serbian state media began.

Nenad Pejic (2020) in his book *Journalism in the time of crisis and conflict: We cannot plead innocence* demonstrates the presence of prejudice proliferation, use of hate speech and sensationalism in the media using concrete examples from the media in Yugoslavia during the war. He highlights the manipulation and propaganda employed by the Serbian media during this period, which according to him, contributed significantly to the escalation of tensions and the deepening of divisions among ethnic groups. Pejic explains that media of all states played a key role in shaping public opinion and fuelling conflict within the region by distorting historical narratives, exploiting nationalistic sentiments, and fostering an atmosphere of fear (Pejic, 2020).

Kemal Kurspahic (2003) mentions the Serbian psychiatrist, Jovan Raskovic who helped the Serbian media to launch a campaign against the new nationalist-party of the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, HDZ) which was ‘a threat’ to Serbian people. This campaign highlighted the crimes committed by the Ustasha against Serbs during World War II, creating headlines about the impending threat of a "new genocide" and calling for the protection of Serbs in Yugoslavia. During that time, Serbian media reported on the Ustasha concentration camps during World War II. As a result, the author believes this had an impact in shaping the negative image

of Croatia and its people, as they were allegedly associated with Ustasha regime, and conveying negative connotations of being murderers and traitors (Kurspahic, 2003).

MacDonald, emphasizes the victimization technique used in propaganda, which the Serbian government used to justify its military actions intended to form a unified Serbian state where all Serbs would live together (MacDonald, 2002). Although the conflicts started for political reasons, such as Slovenia and Croatia advocating for a multi-party parliamentary system, and Serbia being strongly against it and advocating for strong federal influence (Pejic, 1998), the rise of nationalist ideologies in the media shouldn't be overlooked.

A study done by Marjan Malešić (1993) and a team of researchers commissioned by the Center for Psychological Research in Sweden, in 1993, revealed the role of the mass media in the conflict. The analysis included 213 newspaper articles from Serbia and Croatia between August 1991 and January 1992 and showed that media reports from both countries contained prejudice and labelling, exacerbating tensions at the behest of politicians. The researchers noticed that the Serbian media spoke of the Croatian government as fascist and emphasizing the persecution of Serbs in Croatia, using the strategy of victimization and emphasizing the self-defensive nature of its activities. While in Croatia, war exclamations and metaphors for the homeland were spread through the media, portraying the actions of the Croatian forces as a struggle for peace. Brankovic (1998) demonstrates the spread of propaganda through media with the example of the battle for Pakrac (1991). The Socialist Party of Serbia incited Serbian population in Croatia to occupy the police station in Pakrac, town in Croatia which was then predominantly populated by Serbs. This happened in response to the raising of the Croatian flag on the police station building. This was the first open armed conflict between Croatian forces and Serbian rebels. The event was presented in an extremely

dramatic tone by the State TV and newspapers after which the demonstrations broke out (Brankovic, 1998). Media in Serbia labelled these demonstrations as a premeditated and planned action coordinated with the Croatian regime in an attempt to weaken Serbia internally. Using this example, Brankovic (1998) noticed a pattern in media representation of ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, which he explained in the following way:

1. The beginning of events are often minor incidents such as protest in front of the police station
2. Minor incidents are exaggerated by the media, leaving out important elements for understanding the whole story (victimization of one particular ethnic group)
3. Public responds to the media content and the new conflict emerges from there
4. Another media zoom on new conflicts
5. What started as a minor incident turned into a major conflict
6. Another media zoom on the major conflict

Many authors believe (Rogel, 2003; Pejic, 1998; Kurspahic, 2003; Brankovic, 1998) that such media reporting is what helped prolong the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As the authors, Thompson and De Luce (2002) observe, It took a long time for the Western countries that intervened in the war to recognize the enormous role of the media in the Balkan wars. Only a few independent media refused to deepen the conflicts, but unfortunately their voice was silenced by the noise of chaos, sensationalism and propaganda (Thompson, De Luce. 2002).

Media after the war

Post-communist societies follow a long and arduous process of transition. According to some authors (Bajić & Zweers, 2020; Jusic & Ahmetasevic, 2013), liberalization of the media in such societies is often accompanied by the process of liberalization of state institutions and the establishment of democratic practice.

Brankovic (1998) claims that the period of the war propaganda lasted until the elections of 1996 after the peace negotiations in Dayton when the media fundamentally changed its reporting and attitude towards the war and began calling for peace and criticizing those who were in favour of the continuation of the war. Although the war propaganda was stopped in the 1996, the media continued to work in favour of Slobodan Milosevic's regime (Brankovic, 1998). After the UN imposed sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, the state media needed to change their rhetoric accordingly. Brankovic claims that state television managed to convince people that all the problems which occurred from the war (recession, inflation, shortage of goods, youth mobilization, increase in migration, rising crime rate, unemployment) are because of the well-organized international conspiracy against the Yugoslavia. Additionally, he adds that the state media managed to convince nation that a change of government will lead to more of these problems.

The study conducted by Goldevski, von Engelhardt, and Boomgaarden (2013) examines media coverage of war crimes justice during this post-war period in Serbia, after Milosevic was extradited to the Hague Tribunal in 2001. The research focused on war crime reports in four Serbian media of the period from 2004 to 2006. Study identified five frames present in reporting: frame of injustice, frame of denial, factual frame, frame of benefits and frame of rejection. The sixth frame is labelled as 'victimization'. The authors noticed that Serbian public discourse contains the victimization element because of incomplete media reports that leave out the inhumanity and violence towards other

parties and instead mention war crimes in which Serbs were victims, through injustice or conspiracy (Goldevski, et al., 2013) .

According to the same study done by Goldevski, et al. (2013) the media had impact in the way audience sees Hague Tribunal and its trial of crimes in Yugoslavia. Public opinion surveys conducted by the Belgrade Center for Human Rights in 2006, show that Serbian citizens have predominantly negative attitudes towards the Hague Tribunal, mainly believing that the Tribunal is biased. The surveys also show that their country should not cooperate with the institution, or only to the extent that political and economic pressure forces it to do so. In 2009, this number dropped to just under 40 percent, with another 40 percent arguing that the country should cooperate with the Hague Tribunal only to avoid international sanctions or facilitate its European integration.

After a decade of peace between the warring parties of Serbia and Croatia, a study was conducted by Della Vigna, et al. (2014) that examined the impact of cross-border nationalist Serbian radio on the Croatian population. The researchers focused on the impact of this radio in Croatian villages near the border with Serbia, where radio signals are broadcast. Research conducted among this population shows that as many as 78 percent of respondents occasionally listen to Serbian radio. They managed to prove that this radio causes national hatred towards Serbs in Croatia. Their analysis shows that the availability of Serbian radio significantly influenced the voting behaviour of Croatian citizens during the 2007 parliamentary elections. According to this study, exposure to Serbian radio is associated with an increase in the number of votes for a strongly nationalist party. Also, research has shown that the influence of radio is directly related to the appearance of graffiti offensive to Serbs in public places in villages. In essence, the audience that is exposed to this radio shows a greater anti-Serb sentiment.

III. The purpose of this research

The purpose of my research is to investigate whether elements of war propaganda that existed in the past are still prevalent in today's media landscape in the countries of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I aim to gain insights into the current state of media representation of neighbouring nations, ethnic conflicts and past-war crimes in the region, particularly in terms of nationalist sentiments. I want to explore if the media emphasize nationalist issues and ethnical divisions in their reporting.

In my methodological approach, I will employ the concept of media framing, leaning particularly on the work of scholar Robert M. Entman. I will conduct analysis of articles from both commercial and state-owned media outlets against the determined media frames.

Additionally, the BBC's editorial guidelines will be used in this study as benchmark for good journalistic practice. I will evaluate the reporting of media articles against the BBC Editorial Guidelines. By examining these guidelines, I aim to assess the extent to which media outlets in the Balkans adhere to internationally recognized standards of journalistic integrity and ethnics. This analysis will provide valuable insight into the compliance of media practices in the region with established norms and contribute to a broader understanding of media dynamics in post-conflict societies.

IV. Theoretical framework

Sensationalism in the Balkan media

Sensationalism, a journalistic tactic that embellishes stories to augment their excitement or shock value, is not a modern-day phenomenon. It has been prevalent since the inception of storytelling, frequently emphasizing themes of confrontational nature (Uzuegbunam, Udeze. 2013). Sensationalism is a frequent occurrence in the media, especially with the emergence of online media. Given that my scholarly research focuses on online media, it is crucial to examine this technique, which potentially represents a contentious phenomenon within media discourse.

The motivations underlying the use of sensationalism in digital media are manifold. According to Xuan (2023), it is primarily a mechanism used to increase viewer engagement, with the intention of increasing website traffic. Increased attendance of online media is in direct correlation with increased advertising opportunities, and therefore with greater income generation. The debate surrounding sensationalism arises when media use sensitive topics as means to attract attention. Such is the case of the socio-political dynamics of the post-war Balkan region, where three ethnic groups are involved in a process of reconciliation and restoration of diplomatic ties. In this context, media organizations can play a key role, either in facilitating the healing process or in inciting unrest by exploiting tensions.

When reporting on national conflicts in the media, it is important to take into account the sensationalism technique and if the media employ it when emphasizing the national

affiliation of actors in articles. Sensationalism, as a prevalent editorial strategy, entails the distortion and amplification of news events to captivate readers, manipulates the truth to incite excitement (Xuan, 2023).

According to the authors Uzuegbunam and Udeze (2013) this technique often leads to editorial bias in mass media and sometimes involve reports on inconsequential matters or events that lack significant societal impact characterized by the amplification of events and topics to enhance viewership or readership figures. Therefore, while sensationalism can foster increased audience engagement, it carries a potential risk of undermining journalistic integrity.

Xuan (2023) argues that sensational news can mislead and contribute to the spread of false news, thereby violating key journalistic ethical principles leading to a decline in journalistic standards which would have a tremendous impact of democratic societies.

Often the term sensationalism is linked to 'tabloidization' or tabloid style of reporting. Elizabeth Bird (2009) characterizes this style as 'vibrant' and typically viewed as different from the traditional objective journalistic approaches. According to Gordana Vilovic (2003), this phenomenon was evident during the war in the 90s. She observes tabloidization through the lens of the author Frank Esser - as a media phenomenon that was created by changing traditional newspapers due to commercial demands and the wishes of readers, but also as a social phenomenon that encourages major changes in the organization of a certain society. Vilovic (2003) points out that the tabloidization of newspapers has contributed to the decline of professional standards of journalism and ethics, especially in the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe. She believes that the tabloidization of newspapers in Croatia has changed their appearance in such a way that advertisers have flooded the pages and given great priority to infotainment (news that serves to inform and entertain).

Arbaoui De Swert, and Van der Brug's (2020) study presents a comprehensive understanding of sensationalism in news coverage. The authors believe that sensationalism is not confined to specific topics. For something to be labelled as sensationalism, it needs to appeal to the audience and their innate sensory system, no matter the topic of the story. They identify sensationalism as those aspects of news that provoke emotional responses in audiences and propose three categories of sensationalism. The first category revolves around the topic of the news. Certain subjects, like violence or sex, authors claim are intrinsically sensational. The second refers to the narrative perspective. The researchers highlight that adding a human dimension to the story "personalizes the news". These are stories where journalists use ordinary people examples to bring the story closer to the audience. The third, and the last category of sensationalism the authors propose involves the use of specific audio-visual elements to the story. The incorporation of music and other form of visual techniques can stimulate human sensory system amplifying the sensationalism appeal.

While sensationalism might offer immediate benefits, the potential long-term effects and harm is debatable. In the analysis of media texts, my focus will be on discerning elements of shock and fear, and emotionally-charged reporting. When assessing whether the reporting contains elements of sensationalism, I will take into account all the three categories of sensationalism mentioned by the authors Arbaoui, De Swert, and Van der Brug. The spotlight of the analysis will be on sensationalism towards ethnic groups which are the subject of my study, as well as past or present conflicts in the region and.

Framing theory

Framing theory is used in mass media research to explain how the media present real events in the media space. The term framing originates from psychology and was

initially introduced by scholar Gregory Bateson (Arowolo, 2017). In the field of sociology, significant contributions were made by Erving Goffman, through his book *Frame Analysis*, in 1974. Goffman conceptualized the notion of a 'frame' as culturally-influenced interpretations of reality that assist individuals in comprehending occurrences and entities (Goffman, 1974). When using the concept of frame in media, this theory rests on the fact that mass media set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.

Framing theory is often associated with agenda-setting theory (Arowolo, 2017). This theory was officially introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw in 1968, but its roots date back to Walter Lippmann's book *Public Opinion* from 1992 (McCombs, 2005; Wanta & Alkazemi, 2017). While the agenda setting theory implies that the media choose what will be the topic of the public agenda (Wanta & Alkazemi, 2017), framing refers to the framing of that agenda, or in other words, it refers to the emphasis on certain events that are placed within a particular field of meaning. (Arowolo, 2017).

The theory of framing, Scheufele (1999), explains through two concepts: media frames and individual frames. The first refers to the presentation of news and the second to their understanding.

Gamson and Modigliani (1989) refer to the media as central actors in framing issues and claim that the media shapes public discourse through reflecting it and contributing to its creation. They suggest journalists introduce their own frames, thereby contributing to the shaping of public discourse. According to their understanding, a frame in the media communication is a way of presenting information about an issue. Instead of focusing on just one perspective, a frame includes different viewpoints. They also use the notion

of media package which contains various symbols that present the core idea and positions related to the issue.

Robert M. Entman's (1993) approach in theory of media framing provides explanation of how the media offers audiences mental frameworks or schemas to interpret events. According to him, to frame means to choose specific aspects of perceived reality and present them in a way that makes them more noticeable in the communication.

Carter (2013) positions rhetoric as a 'framing-in-praxis'. He sees the connection between rhetoric and framing in communication and persuasion. According to him, framing in rhetoric involves the deliberate inclusion and exclusion of certain elements in an argument, which influences how the argument is presented. Carter states that "one aspect to how the media construct reality concerns the distortion of events" (p. 6).

Scheufele (1999) proposes studying media frames as dependent and independent variables. Research on frames as dependent variables, is focused on understanding how different factors influence the formation or changes in frames. First one implies the influence of social-structural or organizational variables as well as individual or ideological variables by journalists. On the other hand, research on frames as independent variables is focused on the effects of framing, as demonstrated by Entman.

In Entman's study (1991) "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents," he examines the coverage of two specific incidents by media outlets in United States. Entman focused on identifying the specific attributes of the news narratives. More specifically, he wanted to determine which parts of media text are components of the frame and which are not. He approached his analysis by identifying the following characteristics of frame (Entman, 1991):

(1) Frame's size or importance – media highlights certain aspects of the information, giving it significance compared to other issues; the elements of reality are either magnified or shrunk;

(2) Agency – media answers the question who is responsible

(3) Identification with potential victims – frame of depicting individuals or groups as victims, to evoke empathy and emotional responses from the audience;

(4) Categorizations – use of labels to describe incidents

(5) Generalization to a broader national context

Additionally, he noted that frame analysis in the media should concern the politically important news (Entman, 1991).

In the research, my aim is to identify media frames which are associated with the reporting of the media in the Yugoslav wars. The analysis of the literature in the first part of my thesis will help me to identify the most common media frames used during the war which I will look for in the current media narratives.

V. Research questions

There are many authors who believe that the media contributed to deepening of conflicts in the region before and during the war in the 90s (Pejic, 2020; Kurspahic, 2003; Malesic, 2000; Rogel, 2003; Guzina, 2003; Drakulic, 1993; Brankovic, 1998; Thompson, De Luce. 2002; Rabrenovic, 1997; Denitch, 1993). Author Nenad Pejic (2020) pointed out that during the war, political structures put pressure on public broadcasters, which resulted in biased reporting. The author claims that the public service broadcasters of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were used as a means of spreading war propaganda (Pejic, 1998). According to Kurspahic (2003), some media channels besides public broadcasters also contributed to the spread of hostile atmosphere among the three nations: Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks. In my research, I want to find out if elements of propaganda mentioned by the authors can be found in today's media. Hence, my research will include current national public broadcasters and most-visited online media portals in the countries of Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

For the purpose of formulating my research questions, I will use the notion of 'war rethoric' to refer to the following issues of the media reporting during wars in Yugoslavia which were highlighted by the authors: bias reporting with respect to ethnic groups, inciting nationalism, sensationalism, hostility towards other groups (Kurspahic, 2003; Pejic, 1998; Pejic, 2020; Rogel, 2003; Denitch, 1993; Brankovic, 1998; Thompson, De Luce. 2002; Rabrenovic, 1997), ethnic victimization (Goldevski, et al., 2013), chauvinism, hate speech and offensive comments (Kurspahic, 2003; Pejic, 1998;

Pejic, 2020), propaganda (Malesic, 2000). Therefore, the formulation of my first research questions goes as follows:

RQ1: How present are the elements of war rhetoric in the commercial media in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina when reporting about neighbouring nations (particularly Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks)?

Given the extensive analysis on the past media narratives, my proposed hypothesis for the first research question is that the elements of war rhetoric still exist in the commercial media of the former Yugoslav countries.

Additionally, it is important to make a distinction between the public broadcasters and the rest of the media in the analysis. Simply because public broadcasters heavily rely on public financing, which implies a greater responsibility towards the preservation of journalistic ethics and the process of reconciliation. Consequently, my second research question will specifically target the same elements but with a focus on public broadcasters:

RQ2: How present are the elements of war rhetoric in the public broadcasters in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina when reporting about neighbouring nations (particularly Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks)?

The hypothesis corresponding to the second research question posits that elements of war rhetoric, exist in the reporting of the public broadcasters media outlets of the countries in the study.

These research questions aim to investigate if the elements of nationalist manipulation are present in contemporary media. By addressing these questions, the study intends to shed light on the contemporary media landscape and its impact on collective memory and reconciliation processes in the region.

VI. Methodology

My research will involve public broadcasters of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the countries' most visited online media platforms, or in other words, commercial media. My goal is to offer a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the media content in the period from July 11 to July 22 of 2022. I have chosen this period because it falls on the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, which is commemorated on July 11 and 12 (Biserko, 2012). Because of the significance of this event, every year the media channels of all three states reflect on it. The controversy of this event lies in the fact that not all parties agree that it represents genocide (Biserko, 2012), as recognized by the United Nations (1999). This is why it is relevant to my master thesis.

To identify the commercial media portals for data collection, I employed Alexa Rank, a freely available AI tool provided by Amazon. Alexa Rank allowed me to determine the most visited media portals in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH) during the relevant period of 2022.

Based on the Alexa Rank data as of April 30, 2022, the following media portals were identified as the top sites in each country.

Most visited commercial media portals in Serbia (Alexa Rank, 2022):

1. Blic.rs
2. Kurir.rs
3. Nova.rs

4. B92.net

Most visited commercial media portals in Croatia (Alexa Rank, 2022):

1. Index.hr
2. Jutarnii.hr
3. 24sata.hr
4. Vecernji.hr

Most visited commercial media portals in BIH (Alexa Rank, 2022):

1. Klix.ba
2. AVAZ.ba
3. Index.hr (Index will be excluded due to its Croatian origin; However, it will be included in the research regardless, hence the inclusion of the 5th portal on the list, Nezavisne.com)
4. Radiosarajevo.ba
5. Nezavisne.com

The presented media will be used to address Research Question 1 (RQ1). When it comes to the Research question 2 (RQ2), I will include the online media editions of public broadcasters: Radio Television of Serbia (*Radio-televizija Srbije* - RTS), Radio Television of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Bosanskohercegovačka radiotelevizija* -BHRT), and Croatian Radio-television (*Hrvatska radiotelevizija* - HRT). This decision stems from the focus of the study being on the textual media format. It is not to downplay the importance of TV and radio reporting. However, the reason for making such decision is because TV and radio provide one-time content in audio-visual or audio-only formats, which can be more challenging to locate online. On the other hand, textual forms are typically archived on the internet, making it easily accessible for audiences and

researchers. This substantially influences the research, particularly concerning time efficiency.

Article selection was done by employing purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, is a non-random sampling method that does not rely on the probability of a unit being selected, but instead depends on the intentional choice of the researcher (Rai & Thapa, n.d.). The researcher uses their own judgement to choose the units that will be studied. According to the authors Rai and Thapa (n.d.), the primary aim of purposive sampling is to concentrate on specific traits in a population of interest that will most effectively help the researcher in answering their research questions.

When doing the article selection, I took into consideration the analysed literature and the political frame mentioned by Entman (1991) which implies that in frame analysis, one should choose politically relevant news. The analysed articles will be selected according to the following criteria: texts that mention the war and war crimes; events related to the anniversary of the war; texts that follow current events that have to do with the policies of neighbouring countries; texts that contain positive or negative information about neighbouring countries (polities, nation, religion, culture); texts that emphasize the nation and religion of the states of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; text which emphasize art which elevates nationalism.

For text selection within the chosen media portals, I used the search engines available on each platform. To ensure relevance to my research, I focused on texts published between July 11 and July 22 of 2022. The selected keywords for the search included "war," "genocide," "Ustasha," "Chetnik," "Srebrenica," "Jasenovac," "Bosnia and Herzegovina," "Croatia," "Serbia," and "Yugoslavia."

These keywords aimed to capture news articles and reports related to the historical context and current affairs in the region. After conducting the initial search, I proceeded to perform a preliminary review of each text. Given that my research purpose is to detect the presence of specific elements of war propaganda (including hate speech, sensationalism, victimization, bias...etc.), I selected the most captivating articles based on their style of reporting. The final article selection was done by choosing the five texts from each media that exhibit the most elements of war rhetoric. These selected texts will serve as the primary data for my analysis in this research. However, it is important to note that not all texts that passed the selection will turn out to contain these elements. I have chosen to study four commercial media and one state media from each country. From each of these five media outlets, I chose five articles based on the selection criteria forementioned. A total of 75 articles will be analysed, comprised of 25 articles per country.

To proceed with the text analysis, my objective is to identify media frames which are associated with reporting during the Yugoslav wars. In the chapter *Framing theory*, I explained Entman's (1991) framework used in his research on news coverage in United States. Even though his methodology aims to depict how events are framed in the media, it guided my research in identifying media frames when reporting about ethnic groups. The frames under scrutiny include:

- (1) Language – This category covers hostile language use, such as offensive comments or hate speech related to ethnic groups. Language frame isn't included in Entman's forementioned method, but it is relevant to the topic of my study which is why I included it.

- (2) Representation – Corresponding with Entman's (1991) sizing or 'placing importance' on certain elements in the story, this category looks at how media may highlight or exclude aspects of the story related to ethnic groups which are the topic of this study.
- (3) Accountability Attribution – Mirroring Entman's agency frame, this category refers to the actors which media hold responsible in their narratives, focusing on the explicit or implicit attributions of blame or responsibility. These actors could be groups or individuals from specific ethnic group.
- (4) Victimization – Category which corresponds to Entman's media frame of identification with potential victims. It explores how specific ethnic groups are portrayed as victims, particularly in situations when a 'blame' is attributed to another ethnic group
- (5) Categorization – This category aligns with Entman's media frame of categorization. In my research, it refers only to the labelling or categorizing ethnic groups which will be explained further in the codebook
- (6) Sensationalism – Sensationalism as a frame wasn't included in Entman's framework, but it is relevant to my research which is why I included it in my analysis. I have previously discussed sensationalism in the section, *Sensationalism in the Balkan media*. The provided definition will serve as a benchmark for identifying instances of sensationalism in the text.
- (7) Generalization – This frame is also aligned with Entman's frame of generalization. In my research, it refers to stereotypization, or in other words, when individual acts of members of one ethnic group/nation are generalized by the media to represent the whole group

These media frames represent the core areas of my analysis. To facilitate a systematic and comprehensive analysis of these frames, I have developed a codebook to guide me in analysis. This codebook comprises seven categories which are related to each frame: 'Language Use', 'Representation', 'Accountability Attribution,' 'Victimization,' 'Categorization,' 'Sensationalism,' and 'Generalization'. Each category will help me to identify the presence of the forementioned aspects of media framing.

Each category, within the codebook is made up of several statements. These statements serve as markers to identify certain elements or features within the analysed text (e.g. hate speech or ethnic slogans). My role involves assessing whether these elements or features highlighted by the statements exist in the given text.

For each statement, I made a determination of its validity within the context of the text. If the element or feature described by the statement is found within the text, it is assigned a '1' indicating its presence. Conversely, if the statement's element or feature is not found within the text, it is assigned a '0', signifying its absence.

Below are the explanations of each frame or category of the codebook.

1) Language usage pertains to the linguistic choices made, which could involve hate speech, offensive comments or names directed to ethnic groups. By negative adjectives I refer to the adopted negative stereotypes and well-known hostile or malicious names for a nation group that can be considered offensive, and were mostly used in the war time (for example, "Ustasha', Chetnik,... etc.). This type of adjectives which indicate hostility towards other groups, could sometimes be labelled as hate speech. According to the Council of Europe (n.d.), hate speech includes any form of expression that incites,

supports, spreads or defends violence, hatred or prejudice against an individual or group, based on their personal characteristics such as language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, race, colour, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation. United Nations (n.d.) define hate speech as any form of expression (offline or online) directed towards individual or a group based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender, language, economic or social origin, disability, health status, or sexual orientation. However, it's important to indicate that, according to UN, hate speech does not include communication about States, their offices, symbols or public officials, as well as religious leaders or tenets of faith (United Nations, n.d.). Additionally, I will search for the use of ethnic slogans or mottos, that fall under same rhetoric. The following statements will be a part of Language category:

- Offensive language (no elements of hate speech, but can be considered offensive language - use of negative adjectives to describe members of a nation or their government)
- The use of ethnic slogans or mottos that were used in the war
- Hate speech

2) Representation - The second part of the codebook will deal with the representation of news. Here I will look at how media may highlight or exclude aspects of the story related to ethnic groups which are the topic of this study. First of all, I will check if the reporting is balanced or not. This means observing whether all the sides in the story are equally present, or one prevails. The editorial practices of the BBC will guide my media analysis in identifying if the reporting can be labels as 'one-sided'. The BBC encourages the inclusion of breadth and diversity of opinion in reporting. According to their guidelines on Controversial Subjects (BBC, 2019), impartiality must be respected

in reporting, especially when it comes to controversial topics. Based on their guidelines for determining controversial topics (political contention, sensitivity of audience on the matter, conflict...etc.), and on the basis of the mentioned historical data in the paper, the topic of past war crimes in the Balkans is marked as a controversial topic that should be carefully reported according to the guidelines. When examining if the reporting is one-sided, I will use the following questions: Are all sides of the story presented or is only one perspective on a given topic presented? Does this perspective suit a certain group, and can it potentially harm the representation of another nation? Has information and news been left out that could be relevant to the story? If the answer to these questions is yes, the reporting of a particular text will be labelled as unbalanced or selective. To carry out the analysis of the representation frame, I was guided by the BBC's guidelines on impartiality to determine deviations from this rule in reporting. The following statements

- One-sided reporting – This refers to selective reporting of news and information that portrays one ethnic group in a positive light while ignoring or downplaying negative news or information that is relevant to the story but could potentially harm the representation of that nation/ethnic group. Here I will observe whether the text has an alternative perspective and whether priority is given to political speeches in the text that promote the nationalist ideals of one ethnic group and condemn the actions of the authorities of another nation.
- Historical fact manipulation – This point refers to the selection of historical facts. In other words, inclusion of preferred historical facts and exclusion of the other relevant facts from the same event/context.

3) Accountability Attribution – In this category, I proposed the following statement:

- Accusations that individuals or government of one nation are discriminating and oppressing another ethnic group/nation (or individual from another ethnic group/nation) outside, or in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, within of its/their own nation state

4) Victimization - I will try to see are there any elements of victimization of a certain national group, or indicators that one's own ethnic group is portrayed as superior and exemplary, as well as depicting other ethnic groups as problematic.

- Victimization of one ethnic group/nation – depicting one ethnic group as a victim in a text means that a text speaks about injustice towards a certain group that is a consequence of the actions of another group

5) Categorization – The following statements are used in the category of labelling or categorization:

- Categorizing the actions of members of a nation or its government as justified and heroic
- Categorizing the actions of members of a nation or its government as immoral or unjustified
- Presence of negative categorizations for Croats/Bosniaks in Serbian media
- Presence of negative categorizations for Serbs/Bosniaks in Croatian media
- Presence of negative categorizations for Serbs/Croats in Bosnian-Herzegovinian media

6) Sensationalism – The following statements will help me detect sensationalism in reporting:

- Sensational headline (presenting information in a way that is shocking or exciting, with elements of drama and terror)
- Use of sensationalism when reporting on other ethnic groups/nations or their members
- An overview of past war experiences in a sensationalist way

7) Generalization – The generalization category taken from Entman (1991) refers to the process in which specific instances, events or issues are depicted as representative of or connected to broader national trends, values, or characteristics. In order to characterize something as a generalization, I will observe if there are instances where general conclusions are made from the single actions at hand. Generalization will also refer to whether certain undesirable or negative actions of a nation or its government are generalized to represent that nation/government. For instance, if the Croatian government forbids the President of Serbia from making a private visit to Jasenovac, and the media presents the conclusion that Croatian government or its nation is 'fascist' because of this decision, this would be classified as generalization. This is because the media is generalizing one action of the Croatian government to represent the government as a whole. Therefore, the following statement will be used in the category of generalization:

- Negative portrayal of ethnic groups/nations or their government
- Individual examples of bad action by members of one ethnic group/nation are used to make general conclusions

VII. Data collection and analysis

My research involved the analysis of media articles published in the timeframe encompassing the commemoration of the Srebrenica anniversary, from July 11 to July 22, 2022. These media articles were chosen from both commercial and state media of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. They will be analysed accordingly in two different sections. The first section will include the analysis of media articles from commercial media, and the second section will provide results and analysis of state media.

I analysed each media frame individually across all articles. The analysis of these frames in the articles will help determine whether the war rhetoric or certain elements of it can be found in the media articles. Therefore, my research findings will be presented separately for each frame.

To facilitate my result interpretation, I will use numerical counts to present my data. However, these figures do not meet the conditions to draw valid statistical inferences. Hence, the findings cannot be used to make any comparison between the selected media.

Before presenting my research results, it is important to explore current challenges and struggles of media scene in the respective countries. Therefore, my analysis will start by exploring the literature related to the media landscape in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Commercial media

When discussing the challenges of journalism, the focus typically gravitates towards political and economic influences. This is also the case with the media landscape in the Balkans. The main topics of discussion when it comes to commercial media in the selected countries is the economic pressure from advertisers as well as editorial pressures within the media organizations themselves (Brogi Dobрева, & Parcu, 2014; European Commission, 2022; Klancir, 2021).

According to the World Media Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2022) which ranks countries based on their record of media freedom in the previous year, Croatia was positioned the highest among the three states, on the 48th place. Followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina which was ranked 67th, and lastly, Serbia on the 79th place.

The study done by Brogi, et al., (2014), shows that the media landscape in Serbia remains politically parallel. In the study, it is stated that the main obstacles to media freedom in Serbia are not necessarily in passing laws, but in their implementation. Despite a legal framework that meets EU standards, the authors note that media in Serbia is still impeded by political pressures, pervasive corruption, a climate of impunity, regulatory failures and economic difficulties. Majority of Serbian media are the commercial media, privately owned and financed mainly from advertising revenue, which raises the question of the influence of advertisers (Brogi, et al., 2014).

Stojarova (2019) explains that state is one of the major sources of revenue in the media sector in the Balkan countries. She points out that a local media in the respective countries are often instances financed and subsidized by the local government bodies, adding that such media have been criticized for being ‘mouthpieces’ of local authorities

(p. 167). On the other hand, foreign ownership of the media is limited. According to her, this might be the reason for the lack of growth in the professionalization of the media. She assesses that the media landscape in the countries of Western Balkan is very fragmented and saturated, with very low profitability and undermining economic sustainability.

Same study by Brogi et al. (2014), described the media market in Bosnia as small and fragmented due to economic reasons and ethnic divisions. The authors claim that media often rely on financial support from the state, as well as advertising, which potentially threatens their independence. They highlighted the problem of transparency of media ownership and financing, as well as the political pressure and intimidation of journalists, including physical and verbal attacks, with no institutional response. It is also noted that the authorities do not make significant contributions in solving the issues, such as lack of ownership transparency over the media and the financial stability of the public broadcasting system BHRT.

Professor Dragana Trninic claims that ethnic division within society of Bosnia is reflected in its media content (Blaževska-Evrosimoska, 2018). In a society divided along ethnic lines, Trninic explains that media predominantly frames its content within a certain ethnic context. This one-sided ethnic perspective leads to the creation of media content which advocates ethnic division. She believes that Bosnia operates based on such ethnic divisions which are perpetuated to sustain the ruling structures. Furthermore, Trninic states that hate speech is common form of communication in Bosnia (Blaževska-Evrosimoska, 2018, p. 162).

Journalist Milkica Milojević states that the media in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina promote the policy that the Republika Srpska entity is a "genocidal

creation" and that the Serbian people have "genocidal" tendencies, while the media in the Republika Srpska support this stereotype by denying responsibility for war crimes (Blaževska-Evrosimoska, 2018, p. 165)

In the case of Croatia, The European Union's Rule of Law report emphasizes the need for enhancing the structure around state advertising in Croatia, including a new public competition procedure, as there are ongoing concerns about the economic dependence of certain media on state advertising (European Commission, 2022). The report also points out that the professional environment for journalists is impacted by verbal aggression towards them, sometimes coming from politicians. A large number of offensive lawsuits against journalists continue to raise significant concerns in Croatia.

Djurdjica Klancir (2021) conducted a survey among 23 journalists in Croatia, from print media, private and public television, and media portals. Results of her survey revealed that most journalists had experienced some forms of pressure in their newsrooms. As the main sources of pressure in journalistic work, she identifies major corporations and advertisers, followed by politicians and political parties. A significant number of them also reported facing pressure within their own media companies and editorial teams.

The perspectives and research findings presented by authors and studies offer a nuanced understanding of the complex media landscape in the Balkans. The following section contains my own findings and evaluation of the research results regarding the reporting of commercial media in the countries of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. The data was gathered by analysing articles from the four most-visited online media portals in each state (totalling 12 outlets). Five articles were taken from each of the media outlets, resulting in a sample size of 60 articles - 20 articles from each state.

Language usage

Based on the analysis of language frame, my findings show that the language of the war rhetoric can be found in the commercial media of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This war rhetoric language refers to offensive language, hate speech, and the use of ethnic slogans.

Offensive language was present in commercial media across all states. Headlines containing offensive language was observed in nine articles. In the 26 articles which contained offensive narratives, negative adjectives were attributed to either the Serbian or Croatian government. These include: fascists, Ustasha, criminals, Chetniks, evil...etc. These attributes were not qualified to be labelled as hate speech for the simple reason that they did not insult individuals or groups on a national, ethnic, or similar basis. According to UN's definition, hate speech doesn't apply if it refers to state officials (UN, n.d.). Most of the insults were directed towards government. These claims mostly involved strong accusations of someone being bound to the term Chetnik or Ustasha where both terms have a pejorative meaning and refer to individual's chauvinist sentiments. Moreover, one instance of hate speech was noticed in the article published by Radio Sarajevo and it was directed towards Serbs in Southern Bosnia portraying them as criminals and fascists ("Majkama Srebrenice nije dozvoljeno da polože cvijeće", 2022, para. 11).

The use of ethnic slogans or national mottos were observed in 17 texts. Some of these phrases were commonly used during the war of Yugoslavia and include Croatian war catchphrase, "Ready for the Homeland" ("Zašto Vučić može u Rovinj, a ne u Jasenovac", 2022, para. 7), "whole-Serb world" ("Vučićevi tabloidi odrađuju prljavi posao", 2022, para. 10), "revival of the Ustasha" ("Zagreb priznao bruku", 2022, para.

5), "The Serbian people will live and never forget!" ("Oglasio se Vučić", 2022, para. 2), "God is also a Serb, he will protect us" (Duhaček, 2022, "Mladić kao inspirator pokolja nad muslimanima na Novom Zelandu", para. 3).

Representation

One-sided reporting or the prevalence of political speeches which promote nationalist ideals of one ethnic group and condemn the actions of another nation's government was observed in 50 texts out of 60 analysed. These articles were lacking an alternative perspective. Media highlighted certain elements of the story, and placed importance on arguments which showed only one point of view.

On the other hand, the practice of historical fact manipulation was observed in one text. The incomplete information in the text refers to the number of deaths in Jasenovac camp. In the article of B92, it is stated that between 500,000-700,000 people died in Jasenovac ("Zašto Vučić može u Rovinj", 2022, para. 8). Article did not mention the fact that these figures are not officially adopted, and that Jasenovac Memorial Site (2020) uses different numbers (80,000 to 100,000 deaths). Such style of reporting is not in accordance with the BBC's rule of impartiality which underscores the importance of presenting the comprehensive information when dealing with controversial topics (BBC, 2019). According to this rule, omitting the fact that this figure is not accepted by all authors labels it as historical fact manipulation.

Accountability Attribution

Accusations that individuals or government of one nation are discriminating and oppressing another ethnic group/nation (or individual from another ethnic group/nation) was observed in 37 articles.

Detected accusations in the articles did not come directly from the media outlets or their authors, but from Serbian and Croatian officials, once from Serbian citizens ("Oglasio se Vučić", 2022) and once from Bosnian activists ("Majkama Srebrenice nije dozvoljeno da polože cvijeće", 2022). However, it is the media that give importance to certain opinions in which "blaming" narratives are emphasized. Most accusations came from Serbian or Croatian officials. During the analysed period, the diplomatic dispute started after the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic tried to arrange a private visit to the concentration camp Jasenovac. The Croatian government put a ban on his visit justifying this decision by the fact that the visit was not agreed upon the established diplomatic protocol between the two countries. This event was differently presented in the Serbian and Croatian media. Serbian media prioritized the politician's views denouncing the decision as "brutal springboard on freedom of movement" ("Najveći skandal u modernoj istoriji", 2022, para. 5). On the other hand, Croatian media prioritized arguments asserting the violation of official protocols. Index cited the unofficial position of Croatian government which says that Vucic's idea of 'whole Serb world' will not be accepted ("Izvori iz vlade", 2022, para. 4). On the other hand, Kurir reported that the Croatian government is reviving the Ustasha regime and minimizing genocide with this decision ("Zagreb priznao bruku", 2022).

Victimization

There were 32 out of 60 articles which emphasized the injustice towards a certain nation/ethnic group that is a consequence of the actions of another nation/nation-state. In other words, such a presentation of events falls into the category of victimization of ethnic group or a nation. This was typically manifested in quotations from politicians. Examples include statements such as:

- "This year (...) there was a stronger, fiercer campaign and more hatred directed towards the Serbian people," stated Serbian president, Aleksandar Vucic ("Čini se da svi na Balkanu čekaju drugo poluvreme", 2022, para. 2).
- "Nobody cares for the pain of Serbs, nobody has empathy towards Serbian mothers in black, nobody will shed a single tear," said Minister of Internal Affairs of Serbia, Aleksandar Vulin ("Oglasio se Vučić", 2022a, para. 8).
- "Today, we Bosniaks, who have suffered the most from genocide and war, see our sons being arrested because the Prosecutor's Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina is endorsing a 'peace, peace, peace, no one is to blame' policy," said Munira Subašić, President of the Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves ("Majkama Srebrenice nije dozvoljeno da polože cvijeće," 2022, para. 9).

Categorization

Categorizing the actions of members of a nation or its government as justified and heroic was depicted in 51 text, whereas categorizing the actions of members of a nation or its government as immoral or unjustified was observed in 58 text.

In the Serbian commercial media, actions of Croats or the state of Croatia were presented as negative in 18 texts. On the other hand, negative categorization of Bosniaks' actions was seen in 3 texts.

In the Croatian commercial media, the actions of Serbs or Serbian officials were introduced in a negative manner in 14 articles, whereas the negative portrayal of actions of Bosniaks was present in one text.

In the commercial media of Bosnia and Herzegovina, negative categorization of actions of Serbs or Serbian officials was seen in 9 texts and negative categorization of actions of Croats or Croatian officials was seen in 10 texts.

These labels in the articles did not come directly from the media outlets or their authors, but from the actors in the story. The media are the ones who gave preference to certain statements and arguments to be in the foreground, thereby categorizing the actions of nations or its officials as 'good' or 'bad'. Such labelling, when taken out of the context, might not be perceived as 'problematic'. However, given the crimes of the past and the nationalist sentiments and conflict in the region, these results suggest that the commercial media of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia still incorporate elements of war rhetoric.

The following passage is extracted from texts and serve as example of categorization:

- The decision of the Croatian Government represents a breach of numerous legal and civilizational principles and norms. It perhaps most blatantly illustrates the extent to which neo-Ustasha sentiments are present within a significant portion of the Croatian political elite, as well as beyond that sphere, said Dejan Ristic, the director of the Museum of Genocide Victims and a member of the Serbian National

Delegation to the international Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. ("Zagreb priznao bruku", 2022, para. 1)

Sensationalism

Following the guidelines set by Arbaoui, et al. (2020), to detect sensationalism in the news, I noticed 49 instances of sensationalism among the 60 texts. Among these, 43 texts had sensational headline.

The first indicator for sensationalism was the choice of topic (war, crimes, diplomatic dispute, genocide) and the second refers to the way the story is told. The sensationalist articles usually involved emotionally-charged reporting (using the terms chaos, scandal, horrific, brutal...etc.) along with shocking elements (such as detailed reporting on war crimes). The researchers (Arbaoui, et al. 2020), highlight the technique of "personalization of the news" in which individual examples of ordinary people serve to tell a story that will have a greater effect on the readers' emotions. Such stories where journalists cite people's individual examples were noticed in the analysed text. Out of 49 texts that had a sensationalistic style of reporting, 36 texts reported on past war crimes in a sensational way, describing the details of war crimes, sometimes quoting testimonies of individuals who lost a loved one in the war. Examples of sensationalism in reporting are as follows:

- "Here, at this place, my son was killed, and I found but a single bone of his," stated Munira Subasic ("Majkama Srebrenice nije dozvoljeno da polože cvijeće", 2022, para. 6).
- "Stanka Cvjetinovic points out that her former Bosniak neighbours 'told her that they brought her disfigured husband Ivan to Srebrenica and led him through the streets to show what a Chetnik looks like.' " ("Oglasio se Vučić", 2022, para. 8).

- Why are the eyes of Slobodan Ilic of no importance to anyone? The eyes of Serbian judge, that were removed with a knife, a fact proven by testimonies, for which no conviction exists. These eyes of Slobodan Ilic haunt no one, obligate no one. Serbian victims and tears have no parents, while others do. ("Čini se da svi na Balkanu čekaju drugo poluvreme", 2022, para. 17)

Generalization

Generalization was identified in 53 articles. In these instances, isolated incidents of wrongdoing by individuals belonging to one ethnic group/nation were generalized to represent the entire group. The examples include if the forementioned decision of the Croatia is condemned, one thing is to point out that this is 'wrong', and another thing is to assume that this means that it is Ustasha government.

The frame of generalization is reflected in the way the media presents statements. In the analysed articles, it was observed that certain claims and conclusions by cited sources contributed to this. For instance, stating someone's position that it's unacceptable for the Croatian government to ban the Vucic's private visit to Jasenovac, doesn't constitute a generalization. However, drawing a broad conclusion that such decision indicates that the Croatian government has fascist and Ustashe tendencies, is an act of generalization.

Public broadcasters

Before analysing my research findings, it is worth mentioning the background of the current media practices of public broadcasters in the Balkans. In the analysis of public media, the key problems that are often emphasized include issues of transparency in the selection of members of the governing body, as well as the extent of political influence

and pressures exerted on journalists (Šahinpašić, 2013). These issues are intertwined and interdependent, creating a challenging environment for public media to operate and maintain the neutrality necessary to fulfil the role as a 'watchdog' for democracy.

Francke (1995) emphasizes the role of the media as a watchdog of democracy, in other words, the role which entails continuous scrutiny of the activities of government officials and holding them accountable for their actions. Such responsibility of the media further extends to fostering transparency, ensuring fair representation of views and serving as a platform for public debate, thereby fostering a democratic culture. The role of watchdog in the context of state media is of particular importance. As entities which primarily rely on the public budget, they have a higher responsibility to provide impartial reporting. Hence, the greater is the need to ensure the authenticity and credibility of their reporting, and adherence to journalistic integrity standards.

Public services, BHRT, RTS and HRT, of the three studied countries, are financed by a mixed model, which combines public and commercial financing and is the most frequently applied model in Europe (Stojarova, 2019). The public broadcasters of these three countries are usually financed through subscriptions, state subsidies, advertising, sponsorship, sales of programs or their own productions. Stojarova claims that the financial crisis in the public media is often misused to impose political influence.

On another note, media freedom is still a sensitive topic in the Balkans according to the study done by Brogi et al. (2014) The study raised concerns about corruption and political interference in the editorial policy of media houses. Additionally, they emphasized the need to address the ongoing threats to journalists in Serbia and Bosnia, with some journalists living under constant protection due to serious threats.

The European Union's report on the rule of law (European Commission, 2022) drew attention to the need to strengthen the political independence of the Council for Electronic Media and the administration of the public broadcaster HRT in Croatia.

Viktorija Popovic (2004) highlights the political influence over Croatia's HRT, which is facilitated by appointing individuals from political circles to the media regulatory body. She draws attention to the challenge of legislative control of the media and the procedure for electing members to the administrative body of HRT.

As indicated by European Parliament (2022), HRT has been reported to exhibit a bias that favours the government. A similar pattern of pro-government slant is also observed in RTS and BHRT, as outlined by Brogi et. al. (2014).

The political pressure on the media in Serbia is connected with President Vucic, who "started a war with critical media" (Stojarova, 2019, p. 171). She suggests that media landscape in Serbia is marked by political constraint, with public condemnations directed at journalists and media outlets which pursue investigative journalism. Journalists also face verbal attacks from President Vucic, who labels them as "traitors", "enemies", "liars" and "foreign spies" (p. 171).

The public radio and television service in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffers from political pressure, structural problems and institutional fragmentation according to Stojarova (2019). One of such challenges is the appointment of politically suitable individuals to the governing positions and the challenge of coordinating three different public services added to this situation.

There are three public broadcasters in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the state broadcaster (BHRT), which is the subject of this study, and two entity-level broadcasters, RTRS and RTVFBiH (Šahinpašić, 2013).

The two largest broadcasters, Federation Television and Republika Srpska Radio-Television, operate along ethnic lines and behave as rivals (Freedom House, 2012).

Brogi et al. (2014) study states that it is necessary to make a shift in the legal framework that regulates public radio and television, especially in the appointment of members of the management boards of broadcasters in Bosnia. According to authors, broadcasters lack a legal framework that would enable them to provide a balanced and diverse program without political interference. It is also stated that the lack of coherence, consistency and cooperation between the entities hinders the good functioning of the public service system.

Federal Television's editor, Aleksandar Markovic claims that the unique ethnocentric structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina is vividly reflected in its media landscape (Blaževska-Evrosimoska, 2018). He states that the country is visibly polarized, with political figures supporting either the unity of the state or representing specific entities. This political divergence is mirrored in the media, which tends to amplify polarized viewpoints.

In the following section, I outline my research findings of the frame analysis on a selected set of five articles from each of the public media outlets, RTS, HRT, and BHRT. Total number of analysed articles from the state media is 15.

Language usage

Across all 15 articles, four instances of offensive language were noticed in public broadcaster articles, two of them came from RTS and two from HRT. These texts included commentaries of politicians who used the notion of 'Ustasha' to refer to Croatian government and their officials. None of the examined articles included hate

speech. One text included ethnic slogan: 'The Serbian people will live and never forget!' ("Brnabić: Vučić odgodio posjet Jasenovcu", 2022, para. 2).

From these observations, I can conclude that in the media of RTS and HRT there are still instances of offensive language when referring to neighbouring nation-states. The texts in which offensive language was recorded refer to the diplomatic dispute over the ban on visits to Jasenovac. I would argue that inclusion of offensive language when reflecting on past war experiences, does not contribute to reconciliation and settlement of diplomatic conflicts. Especially when the offensive adjectives refer to the sides which are in the conflict.

Representation

One-sided reporting was observed in ten texts. Political speeches that promote the nationalist ideals of one nation/ethnic group and condemn the actions of the government of another nation/ethnic group prevailed in these texts. It was noted that texts foregrounded the viewpoints of certain politicians, echoing a one-sided narrative. The practice of historical fact manipulation was absent in the whole sample from the public service broadcasters.

In the analysed literature and history, it was noted that the tendency of the media during the war was to report from one point of view. Such examples can be seen more than twenty years after the war. All three media had cases of one-sided reporting. The texts in which such a technique is recorded, reported on the diplomatic dispute over Jasenovac. Such reporting is especially problematic when considering the topic of war as it can mislead the reader and potentially arouse animosity towards other nations. Including the other side in the story, provides more information and gives a comprehensive picture of the topic at hand.

Accountability Attribution

Eight articles recorded accusations that individuals or governments of one nation are discriminating and oppressing another ethnic group/nation (or individuals from another ethnic group/nation). Instances of accusations were found in all the media and refer to the dispute regarding the Jasenovac ban. What makes these accusations especially controversial is the fact that they are used within the context of past war experiences.

The following statements from politicians are some of the examples :

- Minister of Culture and Information of Serbia, Maja Gojkovic, said that the decision on Jasenovac ban "brings up questions about the current Croatian authorities' attitude towards Ustasha atrocities and the Serbian people today" ("Srbijanska ministrica otkazala posjet Hrvatskoj", 2022, para. 8).
- Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gordan Grlić Radman, stated that "there is an effort to create the guilt of the Croatian people, which reminds us of the beginning of the 90s" ("Grlić Radman: Revizionistički narativi", 2022, para. 10).

Summarizing the above findings, it is concluded that in the state media of the studied countries elements of the accusation framework can be found when reporting on war crimes from the past.

Victimization

The narrative of victimization was discernible in five articles. Among these, four were published by RTS and one by HRT. The example of such victimization include statements which position one group as a victim in relation to another who is doing the injustice. The following example best reflects the element of victimization:

- Serbian Minister Aleksandar Vulin stated "Aleksandar Vucic, the grandson of the Jasenovac victim is not allowed to pay homage to the memory of hundreds of thousands of slaughtered Serbs, Jews and Romani. The President of the Republic of Serbia is not allowed to visit the largest Serbian execution ground" ("Brnabićeva: Skandalozna odluka Hrvatske", 2022, para. 13)

From the observed findings, I can conclude that in the articles of public broadcasters of Croatia and Serbia, examples of victimization techniques can be found when reporting on war crimes.

Categorization

Categorizing the actions of members of a nation or its government as justified and heroic was depicted in ten texts. The same number of texts labelled the actions of members of a nation or its government as immoral or unjustified. As explained in the Commercial media section, these labels were manifested through the statements of political actors involved in the story.

In the Serbian public service media, negative categorizations of the state of Croatia were observed in four texts, whereas there were no negative categorizations of Bosniaks or the state of Bosnia.

In the Croatian public service media, negative categorization of Serbian officials and their policies was observed in one text, and none of the negative categorizations of Bosniaks or Bosniaks.

In the public media of Bosnia and Herzegovina, negative categorization of Serbian officials was seen in two texts and there were no negative categorization of Croats or Croatian government.

The above results show that elements of negative categorization can be found in the reporting of the state media when it comes to topics related to war conflicts from the past, or diplomatic disputes in the region.

Sensationalism

The presence of sensationalism in the public state media when reporting on war crimes, ethnic groups/nations or nation states, was present in six articles. These texts used emotionally-charged language to refer to past war crimes, such as: 'chaos', 'scandal of scandals', 'ancestors who were martyred and systematically killed', 'evil', 'gruesome crime', etc. Sensational headline was found in one article from RTS.

Four texts from RTS included such narrative, while two texts from HRT used a sensationalist style of reporting when reflecting on war crimes. This form of reporting has not been observed in BHRT.

I would argue that such language choices in the context of diplomatic conflicts and stories about war crimes are not adequate choices for a state media institution which should represent an example of good journalistic practices.

To demonstrate sensationalist frame, I will reference a statement by the director of the Israeli Simon Wiesenthal Center office in Jerusalem, Efram Zurof, as cited by RTS:

- People mostly talk about the death camps in Poland, but Jasenovac had a gas chamber. Most were not killed in the gas chamber, but they were killed in the most gruesome ways - they pressed people's skulls until their eyes fell out, they cut the bellies of pregnant women with the aim of torturing them. They even

invented a dagger called the 'Serbian killer', which was supposed to make the victim's pain even worse ("Zurof: Vučiću dozvoliti posetu", 2022, para. 7).

From the analysis of sensationalism frame, I conclude that the examples of sensationalist reporting could be found in the public media of Croatia and Serbia when reporting on war crimes and diplomatic disputes between the respected countries.

Generalization

The concept of generalization was discerned in seven articles, out of which four came from RTS, and three from HRT. The frame of generalization manifested itself in the same way as in the case of commercial media. In these examples, it was identified that on the basis of one action or dispute, a broader generalization or conclusion was made. The following example illustrates this concept. An example of such framing was presented in HRT and refers to the reaction of Croatian Minister Grilc Radman, to Vucic's attempt to privately visit the concentration camp in Croatia:

- "We consider it a provocation precisely because the victims here are being used as a means, not as a goal" ("Grlić Radman: Vučićev posjet provokacija", 2022, para. 12)

Based on the highlighted results, it can be concluded that elements of generalization feature in the reporting of RTS and HRT, when it comes to the topics pertaining to past wartime experience or diplomatic disputes between Serbia and Croatia.

VIII. Discussion

My analysis aimed to identify presence of war rhetoric in media coverage related to war topics and conflicts among the states of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The study's findings suggest that the elements of war rhetoric, including offensive language, sensationalism, one-sided reporting, and encouraging national stereotypes, persist in commercial media across Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Proposed hypothesis to RQ1 indicated the presence of victimization accusations, encouraging negative stereotypes, hate speech, sensationalism and bias, in the commercial media of the former Yugoslav countries. These results are consistent with hypothesis.

The analysis which involved the evaluation of 60 articles from the four most-visited online media portals in each state, revealed the presence of offensive language in article headlines and narratives, along with instances of ethnic slogans and historical fact manipulation. Moreover, the texts contain serious accusations in which the actions of individuals or governments of a nation were often condemned, while the actions of others were depicted as justified or sometimes heroic. The frame of victimization was reflected in placing importance on certain statements coming from politicians or 'common people' in which they talk about injustice towards one's own nation. In certain examples, media sources employed the tactic of generalization in which general conclusions were formed from single incidents. Additionally, media also employed sensationalist style of reporting when covering war-related issues or crimes.

Overall, these results suggest that commercial media in the states of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, continue to incorporate elements of war rhetoric which can further inflame tensions and hinder reconciliation efforts.

The frame analysis of 15 articles from public media outlets, RTS, HRT, and BHRT, demonstrated recurring frames: language usage, representation, accountability attribution, victimization, categorization, sensationalism, and generalization. Offensive language was present in RTS and HRT texts, indicating an absence of effective mediation in diplomatic conflicts. Furthermore, all outlets exhibited one-sided reporting, highlighting nationalist ideals and biases in their narratives. Accusations of discrimination were found in all media, often invoking past war experiences. Victim narratives were observed in RTS and HRT articles, while negative categorizations of different nations or their governments appeared in different ways across all outlets. Sensationalism, evident in emotionally-charged language and sensational headlines, was noticed in RTS and HRT reports, potentially exacerbating conflict and animosity. Lastly, instances of generalization, where broad conclusions were drawn from specific actions or disputes, were noted in both RTS and HRT coverage.

My research partially confirmed the hypothesis that elements of war rhetoric are present in public broadcasters in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina when reporting about neighbouring nations. The instances of hate speech were not found in the analysed sample. Across all state media outlets, the following frames were noticed: one-sided reporting, accountability attribution and categorization, or encouraging negative stereotypes. The elements of offensive language, victimization, sensationalism and generalization were not found in BHRT's articles. On the other hand, the articles of RTS and HRT had examples of such media frames.

Media frames analysed in the study might not be as useful when looking at them individually. Only when looking at them all together and exploring how they intertwine one can comprehend the presence of complex war rhetoric and propaganda, which during the 90s awakened and encouraged national and ethnic divisions.

IX. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

My methodology has certain limitations. The biggest disadvantage is perhaps the size of my sample. As such, we cannot take it as a representative sample, nor the results as statistically significant. My research should be interpreted as a limited observation that points to the existence of a strong nationalist narrative, rather than asserting its prevalence within all media. The results of my research do not extend to the entire media landscape of the states involved, nor do they necessarily reflect the overall characteristic of the media outlets analysed.

Another limitation of my research is exclusion of radio and television broadcasting, which is important part of the state media reporting. This is primarily due to inaccessibility of the content. Consequently, I was limited solely to their online editions. The inability to access these materials could potentially exclude the important dimensions of state media's representation and impact.

Due to the fact that my research was focused only on primary national broadcasters, it did not include two entity-level broadcasters of Bosnia and Herzegovina, RTRS and RTVFBiH. This is also one of the limitations because the inclusion of these broadcasting entities could potentially enrich my research with newer findings.

Given that the issue of nationalism was a huge point of conflict for decades in the region, and myself being of Montenegrin origin, the third disadvantage lies in the fact that there is a possibility of biased assessment and favouritism to a particular side. Although I tried to be objective in my research, putting media research and science first, this fact should be mentioned because it is possible that my personal views and attitudes interfere in assessing the media-savvy region.

A further setback encountered during my research, relates to the data collection process. Particularly, the limited search engines options available on the sites of majority of analysed media outlets. I faced challenge in filtering content based on specific date ranges. As a consequence, It is possible that some articles have been excluded from the analysis that could have potentially contributed to the quality of my research.

In post-war societies it is especially important to speak about media coverage of nations, ethnic groups, disputes, and war crimes. The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the role of the media in shaping social dynamics and encouraging reconciliation in post-conflict societies, especially in the context of the former Yugoslav republics. By exploring the war rhetoric in the contemporary media landscape of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this study offers valuable insight into the media's influence on conflict resolution and the perpetuation of existing disputes.

X. Conclusion

Ethnic divisions and national conflicts are common reasons for tension among the states of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. When speaking of the processes of reconciliation and promoting tolerance in post-war societies, media coverage is of utmost importance. Their role as a watchdog of democracy is especially important when ethnic differences, nationalism, and national conflicts are at issue. For such reasons, the goal of my study was to shed light on journalistic practices when it comes to reporting on war crimes, ethnic conflicts, diplomatic disputes and nationalist sentiments.

The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the role of the media in shaping social dynamics and encouraging reconciliation in post-conflict societies, especially in the context of the former Yugoslav republics. By exploring the war rhetoric in the contemporary media landscape of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this study offers valuable insight into the media's influence on conflict resolution and the perpetuation of existing disputes.

To perform content analysis, I determined the media frames of the war rhetoric. The analysed historical books and articles that bear witness to the times of war in Yugoslavia and the media polarization of that era, helped me determine the elements of war propaganda. Using methodological adaptation of theoretical framework of scholar Robert M. Entman, and the frames he observed in American media, I determined the frames which guided me in my own analysis. My goal was to determine if the following frames were present in the media of former Yugoslav countries: offensive language, representation, accountability attribution, victimization, sensationalism, categorization,

and generalization. To determine the level of media impartiality, the texts were analysed against the BBC guidelines for journalists, assessing their favour towards a certain side and the omission of specific facts relevant to the story. All of these frames relate to the portrayal and identification of ethnic groups/nations or their nation-states.

My research included 12 media commercial organizations and three state media of the countries of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Presence of war rhetoric was analysed separately in commercial and state media.

Research shows that elements of war rhetoric are still present even more than two decades after the Yugoslav war ended in the public and commercial media. In other words, offensive language, sensationalism, one-sided reporting, encouraging national stereotypes, are all found in the media across Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Based on the evaluation and analysis of media reporting in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the findings of this research indicate that the media landscape of the respective countries is still riddled with biased narratives and unbalanced reporting. Such reporting included instances of accusations and negative categorization when referring to nations or their officials. The war rhetoric is manifested in different ways within the media frames. Interestingly, these pieces of offensive rhetoric and ethnic slogans did not necessarily come directly from the media or their authors, but from politicians, public figures and activists. The fact that these voices and sentiments are given priority in the media narratives indicates a clear bias and fosters a climate of hostility and division.

Sensational reporting, victimization of ethnic groups, generalization of individual acts by nation members, offensive language, are all detected in the commercial media of the countries, as well as in the Croatian and Serbian public service media. Additionally, in

the commercial media, one example of historical manipulation of facts and hate speech was detected.

Despite its limitations, the study still offers valuable insight into problematic media coverage in the Balkans. The results point to the problems of journalistic practice in the region, when it comes to adhering to the ethical rules and norms of the profession. I believe that adherence to these principles and guidelines in journalism can contribute to the constructive resolution of conflicts between nation-states, strengthening of peaceful and diplomatic ways of conflict resolution, reduction of offensive speech, balanced presentation of all sides of the conflict, and greater stabilization in the region.

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